Palace orders suspension of classes in elementary, high schools in Metro Manila, other areas affected by typhoon 'Glenda'

BUSINESS /B1

Gov't beats tax forecast; Jan-May VAT collection exceeds target by 24%

WORLD / A20

Israeli ground forces push further into Hezbollah areas in Southern Lebanon

NEWS / A16

Miss Puerto Rico is Miss Universe; Ms RP Most Photogenic

PHIL... DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED ... FEARLESS VIEWS
Tuesday, July 25, 2006

AT A GLANCE

- The blueprint for economic, infrastructure development is also a timely measure to get capitalists.
- Due to the record tax collection, funds are now available for education, health, more roads, to repair airports, jobs, and electoral and constitutional changes.
- Return power to the people, to the regions away from the mega center "mega-city Manila," Set up "super regions" composing of the Ilocos-Cagayan-Cordillera Quadrangle, Metro Luzon, Bicol-Bethany, Central Philippines, Mindanao and the Cebu-Bohol.
- 5 strategies for global competitiveness: Make food plentiful, reduce cost of electricity, modernize infrastructure, technology dissemination, reduce corruption in all agencies.
- The need for constitutional changes: "The worst prohibitive set rules is in our outmoded Constitution."
- Seek "better way to do politics; poll losers must not make the country pay for their frustrated ambitions."
- High praise for Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan, but at the same time GMA condemns political killings, encourages anticorruption to come forward to stop extrajudicial executions.
- Offers reconciliation: "For those who want to pick up old fights, we've gone... but what's outside of time. Why not join hands instead?"
- Ignores Senate.

GMA like CEO at board meeting, formal dance

By Fe Zamora

THE AFFAIR TO REMEMBER AT THE Batasang Pambansa yesterday had the trappings of a formal dance and a board meeting.

President Macapagal-Arroyo performed with precision like a seasoned CEO, complete with a PowerPoint presentation that included maps and graphics outlining the achievements of her administration and her vision of the future.

The protocol officers looked like they were going to dance the cotillion.

The generals came in their full regalia with medals on their chests and looked stern as they listened to their Commander in Chief's State of the Nation Address.

They were congratulated for their loyalty when Ms Arroyo faced a coup in February.

SPOTLIGHT A8

WIMPHELLS in Batasan and Bicco Norte roll into "megamob into megamass," protests President Arroyo during her State of the Nation Address before the joint session of Congress. On her sixth Sona, Ms Arroyo, all dressed in a shimmering fuchsia terno, basks in the afterglow of her amazing political survival. (More pictures on Pages A8-9.)

EDITORIAL A10

Sona: Promises, praises

GMA pays back allies, sets funds for super regions

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

SHE VOWED NOT TO TALK about politics but her State of the Nation Address yesterday amounted to what could be a payback for her political supporters—from generals and lawmakers to Church officials and especially local executives—as she outlined a program creating economic "super regions" to spur development.

In her "feel-good" address, a confident President Macapagal-Arroyo said she would relinquish the presidency "after three years, eleven months and six days with much, if not all, that I have outlined completed."

She said the real challenge was not to blame for in what was wrong in the country and the economy.

Two years after unleashing on a fiscal reform program, the government now has the money to address social inequity and economic disparity, stamp out terrorism, fight corruption, and undertake constitutional and electoral reforms, the President said.

"Finally, we have the funds not only to pay interest but to spend for education, better roads and bridges, provide good health services, and create more jobs in the country," she said.

SONA: PROMISES A6

HERE LIES IRONY. Where civil society and multisectoral groups, including the Leftists, catapulted Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to the presidency through a series of peaceful protest actions, the Edsa Shrine is now "a no-rally zone." On Monday, police shields were lined up above this marble plaque marking the spot of Ms Arroyo's ascendancy, underscoring this ironic twist to history. EDDIE ESPIRITU

'She must be afraid of her own people'

By Veit Contreras

WITH EVEN BOTTLED WATER BANNED IN the plenary hall of the Batasang Pambansa where President Macapagal-Arroyo spoke, her VIP audience—and the public at large—came in for a "frisking" experience.

In terms of security blanket, only the 2003 state visit of US President George W. Bush rivaled Ms Arroyo's sixth State of the Nation Address yesterday.

One of the most tightly guarded state events in recent memory prompted remarks that she must be afraid of her own people.

From his detention in his rest house in Tuny Hotel, Joseph Estrada described the woman who took over his presidency as a "leader afraid of the people." (See story on Page A7.)

SHE MUST B A6

'Great PR speech but where will money come from?'

By Philip C. Tubeza and Dazire L. Lucas

HOUSE DEPUTY MINORITY LEADER Roilo Golez called President Macapagal-Arroyo's State of the Nation Address yesterday a political campaign speech.

"It was great PR, like a campaign with lots of names mentioned. It was very uplifting to the provinces and cities with governors, mayors, congressmen/women, generals prominently highlighted," said Golez.

"Pity those places and personages that were not mentioned. I noticed no senator was mentioned," he said. But, he added Ms Arroyo "did not talk much about the present state of the nation, what has been accomplished against targets."

Opposition Rep. Gilbert Remulla said Ms Arroyo had learned "how to preach to the choir."

"It's everything the audience wants to hear," he said. "But the devil is in the details. How we are going to fund all of this, I have no idea."

Newly elected Senate President Manuel Villar said he liked the President's plans but asked where the money would come from for the projects.

"I like the idea that there is an unprecedented relationship with local governments. Nevertheless, it should be clear how these are going to be funded," Villar said, echoing the sentiments of Senators Pia Cayetano, Ramon Magsaysay Jr. and Richard Gordon.

Benjamin Diokno, a former budget secretary, said he doubted the government could come up with the money.

"We need half-a-trillion pesos over some years and we don't have that," he

GREAT A11

Villar now leads 'chop suey' Senate majority, minority

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and TJ Burgonio

IN AN UNUSUAL MOVE THAT blurred party lines, the opposition joined administration senators in unanimously electing Manuel Villar the 20th Senate president at yesterday's opening of the third regular session of the 13th Congress.

VILLAR A11

Rains, class suspension spoil anti-GMA protest

By Norman Bordadora, DJ Yap and Blanche S. Rivera

EVEN THE GODS SEEMED TO FAVOR HER.

Barrels of monsoon rains aggravated by typhoon "Glenda" yesterday drenched and thinned the ranks of protesters who tried to get near the Batasan complex to denounce President Macapagal-Arroyo as she delivered her State of the Nation Address.

Police had mobilized up to 15,000 men to secure Ms Arroyo and the lawmakers, but the protests did not turn out to be the kind of stormy affair the lawmen had feared.

Not even half of the 40,000 people whom rally organizers had said they would mobilize showed up on Commonwealth Avenue near the Batasan.

Some organizers attributed the smaller than expected crowd to the bad weather. Others blamed it on the government decision to suspend classes in Metro Manila.

National Capital Region Police Office Director Vidal Quiazol described the rains as "a blessing."

As if symbolic of the toughness of their enemies, the protesters also had difficulty

RAINS A7

THE PERFECT STORM. So it is, literally, for the police who scaled down their numbers on the torrential rain-logic significant numbers away from the protest rallies along Commonwealth Avenue, and the enthusiasm of those who came converted to have been washed away.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TUESDAY, JULY 25, 2006
Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

JDV sitting on impeach cases

'Too many complaints, everyone is confused'

By Michael Lim Ubac

CONTRARY TO EXPECTATIONS, THE IMPEACHment clock did not start ticking when the 12th Congress opened its third regular session yesterday.

The transmittal to the House justice committee of the four impeachment complaints lodged against President Macapagal-Arroyo during the last month-long congressional break was effectively blocked by Speaker Jose de Venecia who said he was stymied by the multiple cases.

"I'm confused as you are [as to] which impeachment complaints to transmit to the committee on justice," De Venecia told the congressmen in his speech opening the session.

Promptly last year

Last year, De Venecia had promptly sent the impeachment complaints filed against the President to the justice committee for appropriate action. Although a staunch ally of Ms Arroyo's, he had said then it was his constitutional duty to act speedily on the complaints.

Yesterday, the Speaker told reporters after his speech that he had 10 session days, or one month, to act on the new complaints.

SPEAKER Jose de Venecia listens to Minority Floor Leader Rep. Edcel Lagman during a break in the morning session of the House of Representatives at the Batasan Pambansa Monday.

Agreement needed

He said he would ask Majority Leader Prospero Nograles, Minority Leader Francis Escudero and Rep. Simeon Datumanong, justice panel chair, to come to an agreement on which complaints to transmit to the committee.

"We have too many impeachment complaints, everyone is confused," he said, adding the opposition should have filed only one complaint against the President where they accuse of ordering the 2004 election, shelving extrajudicial killings and rigging illegal.

Two days?

De Venecia, however, assured the public it would take him only a couple of days to transmit the impeachment complaints to the justice committee.

Only then can the committee invite the complainants to forma and substance of the complaints and, if warranted, proceed to conduct a full-blown hearing.

5th impeachment case

As he was speaking, Rep. Darlene Antonino-Custodio was filing a fifth impeachment case in the office of House Secretary General Roberto Nazareno in behalf of the three complainants...13 retired generals who were presented from entering the Batasan complex by the Presidential Security Group and the security force detailed to protect the President during her State of the Nation Address in the afternoon.

Custodio, an opposition lawmaker, filed the complaint at 11:26 a.m., shortly after De Venecia opened the session.

Private complainants had resorted to repeatedly filing the same case against President Arroyo over and over since June 26 to "cover all the dates" and ensure the one-year ban on the filing of a new impeachment complaint was complied with.

"The complaints are the same, so our effort over the majority will specify as [the end of] the one-year ban... that will be accepted by the endorsers," Custodio said.

Nazareno accepted the fifth complaint despite the absence of the complainants since it had been "duly verified, subscribed and sworn to, and endorsed" by a House member.

"As long as the complaint is complete, you can even send it by mail," he said, adding that the four complaints filed earlier had been transmitted to De Venecia.

"I will transmit this one to the Speaker's office immediately," he said.

For his part, Deputy Majority Leader Edcel Lagman said all the four complaints filed during the break were "prohibited" complaints because they were interposed before the expiration of the one-year ban rule.

Lagman, a lawyer, recalled that the first impeachment complaint filed last year was the Oliver Lozano complaint which was filed on June 27, 2005. It was endorsed two days later by Rep. Gerardo Espina and was referred to the justice committee on July 25, 2005. It was referred by the latter panel the following day, on July 26.

Thus, he said, all four complaints were prematurely filed since the "one-year constitutional injunction is yet to expire."

Based on Lagman's timetable, Inquirer said the ban would be on July 26.

Custodio assured Lagman that private individuals would be filing a complaint then.

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Death threats prompt BIR to go after big tax cheats quietly this time

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL Revenue is now going after big-time tax evaders quietly after Commissioner Jose Mario Buñag received death threats from unidentified individuals, according to a top BIR official.

The official, who asked not to be named, said that Buñag was the latest BIR official to receive death threats in connection with the intensified campaign of the bureau to go after tax evaders under the Run After Tax Evaders (RATE) program.

The same official said that Buñag refused to talk about the death threats and preferred to focus on his job.

"Right now, we're conducting the investigation and filing the cases with less hassles," said the official, when asked why the BIR has stopped the weekly filing of cases against tax evaders.

"We are still filing tax cases but we are no longer announcing them in a press conference with the Department of Justice. But this does not mean we are going down on suspected tax evaders," the official said.

The official disclosed that even the RATE chief, lawyer Isabelo Cabochan, has been killed since dead by unidentified men last month, had requested for transfer to another BIR office which is not connected with RATE.

The source said Cabochan became dear to the BIR's ranking officers since his wife's killing was connected with his work as RATE chief of investigation, the same official said. Cabochan, chief of the BIR's national investigation division, had also received death threats, the source said.

Buñag has said that the bureau would not constrain any enrichment allby of the tax evasion charges filed in court.

Drilon still on collision course with Palace

By TJ Burgonio

THOUGH HE HAS STEPPED DOWN from his position as senate president pending Malacañang could still find fault in Drilon as guilty and will likely tangle with him over the national budget.

Immediately after replacing Drilon, Senator President Manuel "Manny" Villar Jr. yesterday confirmed that his predecessor would chair the powerful committee on finance, which Villar used to head, but virtual swap of positions.

"He will be the finance chair," Villar said. "That's what we had agreed on, and that's what the majority of senators want. We will stick to that."

Drilon, whose last year as Senate president saw the chamber trading barbs with Malacañang over a number of contentious issues, was noncommittal, pointing out that nothing was final until he was elected on the floor.

"After the committees are reorganized and we are elected to the committees, then we will make a statement. Until that time, all announcements are premature," he said.

The Senate chair of the finance committee will lead the Senate panel in negotiating with counterparts in the House over the P1.052-trillion 2006 national budget, which has yet to be approved.

Negotiations on the general appropriations act fell through before Congress adjourned its second regular session on June 4 following the frame over the P64-billion cancerdevil by the senators.

President Macapagal-Arroyo is expected to present the 2007 budget to Congress for approval within the next 30 days.

In the next few days, Villar would have to also relinquish his chairmanship of the public order committee. Senators Jinggoy Estrada and Jinggoy Estrada were reported being considered for the post.

Villar said one or two committees would have new chairs as he had to make good his "commitment" to supporters.

But he said the senior guy would proceed regarding the rest of the 50 standing committees of the chamber, pointing out that a major reorganization would jeopardize the passage of key legislation in the short time between now and the 2007 mid-term elections.

"As much as possible we don't want to rock the boat in the first weeks. We will talk about it," he said in an interview.

In his farewell speech, Drilon said he left no enemy in relinquishing his post to Villar. But after his speech, he looked glum when he walked down from the rostrum to the floor, where he was congratulated by his colleagues. With a report from Aurlan Labog-Javellana

AU SUBMIT QUICK FACTS

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UR

RP hopes for zero casualty in Lebanon

By Nikko Dizon

THE GOVERNMENT hopes to have a miraculously zero among the thousands of Filipino workers still stranded in war-wrecked Lebanon.

"Our aspiration is to have a zero-casualty war. We're still on it and we expect to maintain that, which is why we're exerting all efforts to get our Filipino workers away from the conflict," Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Gilberto Asiapo said yesterday.

In an interview, Asiapo said the DFA had yet to receive a report on Filipino casualties as a result of a "direct hit" by Israeli bombs falling in Lebanon.

He said the domestic helper reported the other day to have been the first Filipino casualty of the war turned out to have suffered her injury in a fight with her employer.

"The wounds were not war-related," Asiapo told the Inquirer, referring to Rosalyn Cuevas of Bacolod City.

Asiapo said Philippine officials in Beirut verified that with Fr. Ignacio Ad-rianida, the only Filipino priest in Lebanon who has been helping distressed OFWs.

Ambassador Roy Cimatu said that according to Father Adrianida, the OFW had a fight with her employer," Asiapo said.

Cimatu had reportedly called her sister in Bacolod City and told her she was hurt in the fight as well as in the fighting in Lebanon broke out.

Another domestic helper, Florida Robin Lore, had sent a text message to her family in Zambales saying she had been injured by glass fragments when an Israeli bomb shattered the windows of her apartment in Kfardebb outside Beirut.

"Of course, eight injuries cannot be avoided. It's impossible that no one will get hurt. You can get hurt from just evacuating to seek cover," Asiapo said.

Last Sunday, 231 of the 34,000 Filipinos in Beirut arrived in Manila, completing the first batch of OFWs evacuated from Lebanon.

The government has ordered the total evacuation of OFWs only in southern Lebanon.

Alert level 3, which urges Filipinos to volunteer to safer areas, remained enforced in other parts of the country.

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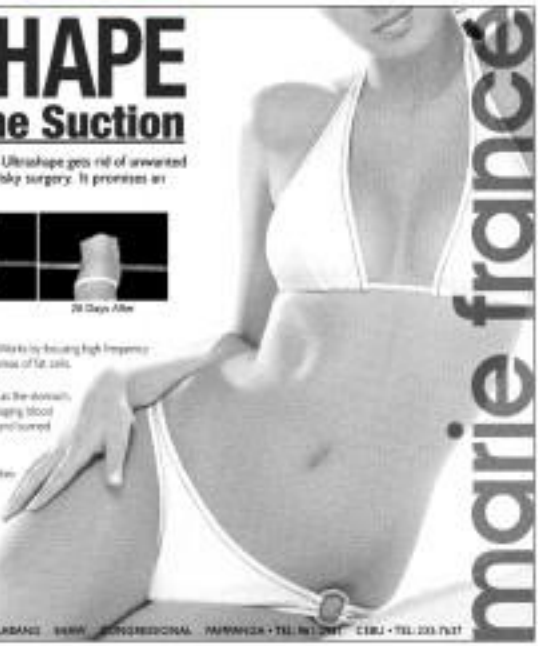

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Stormy weather wreaks havoc on court schedules

TESTIMONY SUBJECT scorcher wreaked havoc on court schedules in Makati City where several anticipated hearings at the regional trial courts had to be postponed.

The strong winds and pouring rains brought by typhoon "Glenda" prompted the suspension of the hearing into the rebellion charges against 26 military [illegible] implicated in a plot to violently oust President Macapagal-Arroyo last February.

Party-list Representatives Teodoro Casiño and Joel Virador of Bayan Muna, Crispin Beltran and Rafael Mariano of Anakpawis, and Liza Maza of Gabriela had confirmed on Sunday they were attending the 9 a.m. hearings of their rebellion case at the RTC.

As it turned out, they did not have to appear in the sala of Branch 150 Judge Dave Ramos as all hearings at the Makati RTC were canceled by early morning.

The case is a consolidation of two rebellion cases filed by the Department of Justice—one against Beltran and rebel soldier Lt. Lawrence San Juan filed on Feb. 28 and the second a case filed on May 12 against the Bayan lawmakers, former Sen. Gregorio Honasan, and 41 others. The court has yet to set another date for the hearing.

Ramos also canceled yesterday's trial of the four US Marines accused of raping a Filipino woman at the Subic Bay Freeport last year. Sheryl U. Quintos

'Glenda' heads for Taiwan

TYPHOON GLENDA (INTERNATIONAL name: Kaemi), brought heavy rains and winds to Northern Luzon yesterday as it moved toward Taiwan, shutting down classes, government offices and the stock exchange in Metro Manila, officials said.

The seventh storm this season was packing winds of 120 kph per hour and gusts of up to 160 kph as it approached Batanes, where authorities raised a weather alert.

The typhoon was expected to make landfall over central Taiwan early today, then weaken into a tropical storm before reaching its second landfall along China's Fujian province later on Tuesday, forecasters said.

In Metro Manila and the rest of Northern Luzon, still reeling from Tropical Storm Ilio that left about two dozen dead in landslides and flash floods, authorities suspended school classes and work in government offices. The stock exchange also was closed.

In Taiwan, fishing boats sought shelter in ports and residents were warned to prepare for torrential rains and heavy winds.

September opening under study

INCOMING EDUCATION SECRETARY Jesli Lapus said yesterday he would study the proposal to move the opening of the school year from June to September to avoid the inclement weather.

"If classes start in September, it could be too rainy. On the other hand, it might be too hot inside the classrooms during the summer," Lapus said.

He said he will study the pros and cons of moving the school opening, which has been broached recently.

He said moving the school opening would also give more time for the nation's 40 Monday morning, Kaemi was about 300 km southeast of the southernmost tip of Taiwan, over the Bashi Ocean, the Central Weather Bureau said.

Kaemi is the fourth storm to affect the country since the start of the school year when there will be a lot of classrooms constructed," he said.

Lapus, a staunch supporter of President Macapagal-Arroyo, is set to formally take over the Department of Education at the end of the month from officer in charge Fe Hidalgo, who took over after Secretary Florencio "Butch" Abad resigned last year. Marvin Rojas

Japan to provide grassroots support

THE JAPANESE government will not only participate in monitoring the progress of the truce in Mindanao but will also provide "grassroots grant assistance" as its contribution to peace efforts in the region.

"We, the Japanese, are determined to work hand-in-hand with you to achieve a peace settlement that is acceptable to all stakeholders in Mindanao," said Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso in a speech delivered last Sunday on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Philippines.

"Japan realizes that peace and stability in Mindanao is crucial to maintaining regional stability in Southeast Asia," Aso said.

Japan's participation is the international team monitoring the implementation of the ceasefire between government troops and the secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) will focus mainly on "playing a leading role in the economic and social development aspect," Miko Dizon

PAKISTANI Ambassador Muhammad Hasnain Khan

All Nations Women's Group marks 59th year

THE ALL NATIONS Women's Group will celebrate its 59th anniversary on July 31 at the residence of Pakistani Ambassador Muhammad Hasnain Khan in North Pacific Park, Makati City, AWG president Cristina Cuhang-Castro announced.

Theme of the affair is "All Nations Women's Group Providing a Comprehensive Network of Service for the Global Community."

The ambassador's wife, Aida Khan, will give the opening remarks to be followed by her husband who will deliver the keynote address.

Ambassador Khan will also induct the new officers of the AWG. Musical and dance numbers will be performed by the Ramon Magsaysay Group and the women members of the diplomatic community, Castro said.

Quezol at Rotary Kamuning

DIRECTOR VIDAL F. Quezol, police chief of the National Capital Region, will be the guest of honor and speaker at the regular meeting of the Rotary Club of Kamuning at 7:30 tonight at the Solo Hotel in Quezon City.

Suit vs Lafayette alarms business group

THE PRESIDENT OF Philippine Industries (PII) has expressed alarm that any injunction order stopping the 30-day tax run of the mining operations of Lafayette Philippines Inc. on Sagua Sagua Island in Albay could derail the entry of more foreign mining investments into the country.

PII president Jesus Arranza said the government's target of raising $122 million in mining investments by stopping the Supreme Court from lifting a status quo order issued by the Regional Trial Court ... before the [illegible] Provincial Trial Court.

"The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) has recorded a total of $67.91 million in fresh investments from January to May this year," Arranza noted.

"But now the exact opposite ... Lafayette and the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ... might have foreign investors to bring their money elsewhere, despite the renewed decision promoted by the government in the mining sector," the PII official added.

Reject the super-elite's deception and misinformation

IN THEIR ATTEMPT to discredit the irrepressible movement toward Charter reform, the oligarchic families, special-interest groups and their minions—who style themselves as 'One Voice'—mislead and misinform the Filipino people.

This is a tactic that members of the super-elite class—the super-rich people of Manila—have used, all too often, whenever political reformers threaten their economic and social interests.

In fighting Charter reform, One Voice has used the power of its money to make up for the bankruptcy of its ideas. Its television ads are slick—and cost hundreds of millions of pesos. But slick does not mean intellectual quality. One Voice has not disproved the urgency and centrality of change: the shift to a unicameral parliamentary government to rebuild the country from the costly and glaring failures of the presidential system.

Presidential system breeds dictatorship

One Voice does *not* say why it loves the presidential system that, for over 70 years, has produced a dictator; made military adventurism an endemic threat to popularly-elected governments; created the phenomenon of "creeping coup" and constant instability; and made 'people power' an abused extra-constitutional political remedy.

In truth, the presidential system has been a breeding ground for dictatorship. One Voice is silent on this—as it misleads people on the success of the parliamentary system in most of Europe and Asia. The political scientist Juan Linz of Yale writes that *"Europe's more accountable prime ministers—and their parliamentary counterparts in countries like Canada, Japan and Australia—represent a safer institutional alternative" to the presidential model set by the United States.*

We appeal to the nine million Filipinos who have signed the People's Initiative to amend the 1987 Charter—and millions more of our local officials and their constituents, and those who are exasperated with a system that no longer works—to reject One Voice as just another attempt by oligarchic families to deceive and misinform our people.

What we stand for

Here are the things for which ***Sigaw ng Bayan*** stands:

1. *We are for a shift to parliamentary government and a unicameral parliament.* To continue with presidential government is to condemn our country to failure—in the world's fastest-growing region.

2. *We seek the abolition of both the Senate and the House of Representatives and the creation of a single legislature, a single chamber.* Having two houses of Congress is like having two boards of directors running a single corporation. This arrangement, as evidence has shown, is ruinous to the country. One Voice wants the presidential system and the Senate and House to continue —and thus perpetuate divided government.

3. *We are for elections in 2007.* And we are for synchronized elections every five years thereafter—to regulate campaign spending that costs billions of pesos—and favor only the wealthy few.

4. *We are not for extending indefinitely the tenure of those already in power. We are not about to take away the people's rights to vote for the country's Head of Government.* One Voice misleads when it says otherwise.

5. *We are not for having a powerful Interim Parliament and a super-President.* The Charter amendments we propose will clip the powers of the President, some of which the Prime Minister would then exercise. The President will remain the Chief Executive, and the Prime Minister the chief operating officer of government. One Voice misleads when it says otherwise.

6. *We want a Prime Minister who will be directly accountable for how the government performs in office.*

An honest, efficient and open government will guarantee the Prime Minister's stay in office. Inefficiency and corruption will lead to his peaceful removal—through a *no-confidence vote* by Parliament. This ready resort to a confidence vote will remove every justification for military coups, destabilization and extremist plots funded by power-hungry politicians and business oligarchs.

7. *We want a justice system strong in the enforcement of our laws.* We are not about to weaken the Supreme Court, or any other part of our justice system. One Voice misleads when it says otherwise.

8. *We want the culture of turncoatism swept away—to reform our politics by its roots. Wala nang mga balimbing.* We insist that government be based on party platforms—and not on charismatic personalities. By prolonging this culture, One Voice wants to perpetuate the root of our negative and destructive politics.

9. *And we want to build up a responsible Opposition*—one neither beholden to special interests nor bound by ties to the politicized sector of the military. Under the parliamentary system, the Opposition is the government-in-waiting—ready to take over the responsibilities of office once the incumbents fail. In a parliamentary system, a responsible Opposition provides the real checks and balances to ensure government transparency and efficiency.

Charter change our only hope

Charter change is our only hope —to change our system of government, our negative culture of politics.

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'One Voice' has launched a nationwide TV campaign to stop public opinion from tipping in favor of Charter change.

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One Voice's slick TV spots (done in full color and booked for prime time by Campaigns and Grey) started showing on July 14.

One Voice's campaign will run for six weeks—until 30 August—on all the major networks: on GMA-7, ABS-CBN, ANC and ABC Channel 5.

During the first two weeks, the campaign will be running 16 spots; during the third and fourth weeks, 31 spots; and during the fifth and sixth weeks, 91 spots.

P2 million a day

On average, One Voice will be spending **P2 million** daily on *each* of the three networks.

And since **P6 million** a day will add up to **P42 million** a week, **P42 million** over six weeks will run to a grand total of **P252 million**.

Where is the P252 million for the TV campaign coming from?

We believe it only right that citizens should challenge One Voice to reveal where the **P252 million** it is spending on its TV campaign has come from.

And since there is no free lunch, it is also right that citizens should ask what One Voice's benefactors expect in return for their money.

And who are these people who are funding One Voice's cause?

We in *Sigaw ng Bayan* have never hidden our identities and our specific interests. We're local officials, professionals, small businessmen, office workers. Our name is Legion, for we are many.

We are one in our realization that it is not individual leaders but the political system itself which is responsible for the way we have fallen behind most of our neighbors in the world's fastest-growing region.

We are one in our wish to assure our young people that there is hope for this country.

From One Voice we expect the same kind of openness, probity and sense of the nation.

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GMA 'misrule' should stop, Erap says in own Sona

By Norman Bordadora and Leila B. Salaverria

EX-PRESIDENT JOSEPH ESTRADA yesterday called for a continuing search for the truth behind the alleged crimes plaguing President Macapagal-Arroyo, saying a leader afraid of the truth coming out "is a leader afraid of the people."

In a statement from his detention at his Tanay, Rizal, estate, Estrada also said the "ex-president, corruption and misrule" under Ms Arroyo should stop if the country was to move forward.

Estrada is himself facing charges of corruption and is on trial in the Sandiganbayan.

Afraid of people

"My inner search and upheld the truth. It is said that a leader who is afraid to let the people judge the truth in the free exchange of ideas is a leader afraid of the people," said Estrada in his own frame of the nation Address.

To this day, Ms Arroyo has not fully answered a host of allegations, including claims that she conspired with former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano to rig the results of the 2004 elections.

Damaged future

"We cannot proceed with this state of the nation for it can only result in a damaged future," Estrada said.

He said: "The true state of the nation is also found in the many instances of the selective administration of justice, where those who criticize this regime are summarily charged and arrested while the allies of this regime who commit plunder and many crimes of graft and corruption are allowed to go scot-free."

Divided house

He also cited the suppression of the rights of political dissidents.

Estrada said Ms Arroyo's frame portraying the country as doing well was a "big lie."

"The true and authentic state of the nation is found in the hard, dangerous and expensive journey being experienced today by our people and this cannot be denied because this is what you feel, see and live in your daily lives," he said.

The true state of the nation shows "a house divided, corrupted and in constant disarray."

"Today we do not only have a damaged culture, but a damaged republic, weakened by damaged institutions, and administered by a government that has lost credibility and working under a damaged system of justice and morality," Estrada said.

Rains, class suspension spoil anti-GMA protest

From page A1

hauling a 13-foot effigy of Ms Arroyo—portrayed as Hitler—because it had been demolished for hours by the rain.

Unable to turn it to ashes, the militants poked and even it to destroy it.

Police estimated the number of protesters at 5,000 (7,000 Militants said they numbered more than 10,000).

Whatever the number, police set up a human blockade to keep them away from the area where Ms Arroyo was speaking.

Police later said they had actually exited down the number of men mobilized for the Sona because of the absence of serious destabilization threats.

Only half of the 16,000 men planned for the mobilized were deployed around the metropolis, Quezol said.

"There were still threats, but they were already being monitored," he said. "We no longer saw any possibility that anyone would attack Batasan Pambansa."

'Batasan 5' plus plus

Members of the so-called Batasan 5—the militant congressmen who recently sought refuge in the House to shield arrest on rebellion charges—took part in the protests, joining rows of mossed leftist forces in the area.

They were Deputy Minority Leader Satur Ocampo, Joel Virador, Teodoro Casiño, Rafael Mariano and Liza Maza.

Mariano was soaked by the rain after a three-dimension broke as he was delivering a tirade against his enemies.

In a separate area occupied by groups under Lakas ng Bansa were Akbayan Representatives Mario Aguja, Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel and Loretta Ann Rosales, and former Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman.

Others who spoke included former Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr. and former Sen. Ernesto Maceda. Also seen were Bayan Muna Rep. Jose Maria.

Biggest 'boos'

In one point when the rains fell again, about 200 anti-GMA rallies abandoned their positions, some sought shelter under an overpass, mostly to protect, smoking or sending text messages on their mobile phones.

Almost every round of applause that echoed in the halls of the Batasan was matched by a downs of "boos" outside.

The biggest boo came when Ms Arroyo hailed Army Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan, whom militants accuse of being behind the killings and disappearances of political activists.

"She's making a hero out of a butcher," Satur Batasan president Wilma Portalesa said, adding that would embolden the military's "death squads" even more.

Divisy still hopeful

"I did not expect her to do an honest to goodness the respect to so many killings," Akbayan president Leonor said.

"The government participation and culpability to the point of willing to deal with this brazen pirate of Malacañang," he said.

The failure of Ms Arroyo's political opponents to force her to step down failed to demoralize Soliman.

"I admit they succeeded in set up to people feel [our] weakness," Soliman said. "Their rapid tactics worked, especially among the middle class ... but the people will act in their own time and space."

Voice from China

"There are fewer people out on the streets now obviously because of the rains, but it does not mean there is less anger. The people are watching," Soliman said.

To Satur Reyes, another women's group member who has been hibernating in China after losing his Quezon City partido, did not seize the chance to address the barrage yesterday.

Speaking on the phone with fundator Michelle Location, Reyes said that despite the rain pitch-up jammed by the President, nobody has the would be rejoicing.

"Who will be happy with a list? With a dread? With a thief? Who will be happy with someone who tortures the Filipino's name and bribes the Iraqis?" Reyes said.

Not Gloria but Gloria

Healthcare chair Eleanor de Guzman said Duck was still with Ms Arroyo, but she added: "Everything seems to favor her, but in the end, she'll lose."

Others found humor in the situation.

"We're suffering more than typhoon Gloria than typhoon Gloria," said Bayan's ng Mangga-gawa secretary general Judy Ann Miranda. She said the typhoon's name was really "Gloria" but was changed "out of protocol."

Let the rains fall

The police were pleased.

"I wish it would rain harder," said spokesman.

But the ground commander, Senior Supt. Eduardo Ligo, said the downpour led to disorganization.

"Tomorrow, all these policemen would call in sick because of a cold," he said.

The protesters seemed to agree.

"This is the wettest Sona ever. We are about eight to ten thousand here and 50 are already sick. They either have fever, cough or a cold," a militant spokesperson said.

The rallies feared the thunderstorms with raincoats, hats, jackets and umbrellas.

Ms Arroyo's effigy complete with Hitler's distinct mustache and garbed in a general's olive drabs with skulls for medals, was paraded through Commonwealth Avenue.

Different economy

Bayan Muna secretary general Nathaniel Santiago said the effigy showed Ms Arroyo's "fascist tendencies."

"This is worth it as long as we get our message across that Gloria is a fascist," said Carl dia, of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas.

The Danding-ganang Kabisig ng Kilusang Mamamalakas ng Pilipinas painted its different picture of an economy which Ms Arroyo says is thriving.

Citing the Base Foundation, Bataskbayan said the unemployment rate had grown to 11.4 percent and that 14 percent of the labor force had been compelled to look for jobs abroad for lack of opportunities in the country.

Protests in provinces

Members of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers from various schools in Metabon City and Pangasinan also joined the protests, ignoring an appeal from the Department of Education to stay indoors.

"For those who are committed, rain and floods could not stop our desire to express our grievances and join the rallies," said Jocelyn Martinez, a Grade 3 teacher.

Some of the teachers waited through flooded streets to take part in the protests.

More than 8,000 members of militant groups staged separate rallies in Cebu, Negros Occidental, Iloilo, Aklan and Capiz.

About 3,000 protesters marched on the main streets of Iloilo City, denouncing not only Ms Arroyo but fellow Ilonggo, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

In Mindanao, protests were held in the cities of Davao, Cagayan de Oro and General Santos.

In Baguio City, a group of Church leaders presented at a prayer rally the widow of Baguio activist Marcos Bangit as a symbol of the "true cross of the nation."

Agustina Bangit, whose husband was murdered in June, said that her plight mirrored the political crisis Ms Arroyo has been trying to hide with statistics about the economy. With reports *from Lalaine A. del Puerto, Leila B. Salaverria and* Nancy Carvajal in Metro Manila; Vincent Cabreza, Desiree Caluza and Villamor Visaya Jr., *PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*; Rosette Ojeda, *PDI Central Luzon Desk*; Victor F. Boyon Jr., Carla I. Gomez, Felipe Celino and Jaime B. Balandoy, *PDI Visayas Bureau*; and Sandra Z. Zosa and Dennis Jay Santos, *PDI Mindanao Bureau*.

Corrections

IN THE JULY 13 ISSUE, a sports story on Page A20 ... Nonoy Lacson's former league card undefeated"—unanimous that La Salle triumphed over Philippine Christian University in a National Collegiate Athletic Association basketball game. The school that beat PCU on July 1 is not Colegio de San Juan de Letran—not De La Salle University-College of St. Benilde.

* * *

IN THE JULY 24 ISSUE, a story on Page A4— Tupas John ceasefire monitors in Mindanao"—misspelled the surname of the Japanese foreign minister. The name of the Japanese foreign minister is Taro Aso—not Aso.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for corrections of factual errors in writing to the Inquirer, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5th Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Makaraig Street, Makati City, fax No. 897-4150/896-6160, e-mail address inquirer@inquirer.net, or text message (0917-8008 Local 344).

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MARIE +63917-3669237
Email : globalcampus.ph@gmail.com
* ATTENDANCE IS FREE OF CHARGE

THE PALACE CHOICE of Mendiola—container vans—are placed end to end across Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City to stop protesters from even catching a glimpse of the Batasan complex.

GUARDIANS OF MENDIOLA. the Manila Police District officers and men attend Mass on Monday morning at the San Beda chapel before closing their gates at President's uprising.

TOO WET TO BURN: Protesters point at GMA's Malacañan effigy.

DAVAO City protests. Ate Aina Cruz, Anila, Negros Occidental, Davao, Cagayan de Oro City, Baguio, etc.

Sona: Promises, praises, thanks

From page A1

Mr Arroyo said she was ready to embark on a government-rapid investment program for the government after putting in place fiscal reforms two years ago and boosting on providing better social services since last year.

5 super regions

Based on her plans, the President wants to implement her super-regions plan after the midterm elections. The "super regions"—in northern Luzon Agribusiness Quadrangle, Metro Luzon triangle, Bicol, Central Philippines, Mindanao and the cyber corridor.

"To attract investments and strengthen the super regions, the President said her administration would push to make food more affordable and labor wages competitive, reduce electricity rates, modernize infrastructures at least cost, establish supply and production technology, and cut red tape.

The President said the megaprojects and super regions were meant to lay the ground-work for the country's shift to a federal form of government through her administration's continuing drive to change the Constitution, a topic she only touched briefly this time.

"The most prohibitive red tape is in our outmoded Constitution. We need constitutional change to bring our rules of investment to the new millennium," she said.

While she ignored lingering calls for her ouster, the high-luxury of her rule in her sixth State-of-the-nation address in January, Ms Arroyo was very open in her gratitude to people and lent history that stood by her in her most recent political crisis.

She called her supporters in Congress the "true friends of the Filipino people."

She also thanked the "greater majority of soldiers and policemen who were loyal to the flag and Constitution."

"The huge and deep core of your loyalty has ensured the nation's security. The true multitudes have been condemned by the people. They and their patricians-soldiers and bankers are being brought to justice," the President said.

Ms Arroyo survived an a coup attempt in February but continues to be hounded by allegations of vote-rigging in the 2004 election, human right abuses, corruption and dictatorial tendencies, amid concerns over military restiveness.

Ms Arroyo also thanked the Filipino people "who have restored prominence, if not pathetic, talk for despair ... for smacks instead of charisma."

"Thank you, thank you from the bottom of my heart," she said.

Vilhar

Her appreciation of Senate President Manuel Villar's presence was palpable, considering the mild shudder she got from past Senate President Franklin Drilon who had led calls for her ouster.

She exercised her stinging remarks for political foes who continued to be in the opposition even after the mid-election drubbing Arroyo's allies had led calls for her ouster.

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"Thank you, thank you from the bottom of my heart," she said.

Join hands

Her political enemies have filed fresh impeachment complaints against her on nearly the same charges as last year's.

"Why not join hands instead in the biggest challenge of all, where we all win or we all lose the battle for survival and progress of our one and only country. I don't want to said this, in the end, I defeated my enemies," Ms Arroyo said.

"I would rather have it said that all of us, you and I...friends and foes today achieved together a country progressive, prosperous and united," she said.

Ms Arroyo only referred to persistent moves to oust her in jest.

"Thank God, I thought, on someone night, also try to impeach me but relaxing Article 11 of the Constitution on the solidarity of the family as the foundation of the nation," she said, referring to the growing problem of Southern Tagalog with heads working overseas.

Bishops and projects

Among those who filed new impeachment complaints against Ms Arroyo were some Catholic bishops.

But the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines issued a pastoral statement two weeks ago calling on support for fresh moves to impeach Ms Arroyo.

In a move that could be interpreted as a way of reciprocating this support, the President mentioned the names of two members of the CBCP in her televised address.

She announced that her administration would allocate P100 million a month for small irrigation projects, like the flood control projects of the Region II Development Council headed by Bishop Ramon Villena.

The President also congratulated Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal on the drop in lepromas for public service contracts in Metro Cebu, which she said helped upgrade the infrastructure there.

Pacquiao

Instead of figures showing the economy's strength, the President presented happy and contented Filipinos—former Cordillera People's Liberation Army member Jose Balweggay and his grandson, who received a land title from the government, and call center agent Lady Ign, who was granted she didn't have to leave the country to help her family.

To make Filipinos feel good about themselves, the President acknowledged the presence in the audience of boxing sensation Manny Pacquiao, Miss Universe Queen Jr. Shamcey Supsup, Miss Universe Guinevere Pangilinan, Miss Tourism Queen International 2006 Janine Gutierrez, Filipino medalists in the 2005 Southeast Asian Games, and the first Filipinos to climb Mount Everest.

"We are a great people. We have honour students and have set cops. We have realized the heights of Mount Everest, dominated Southeast Asian Games, won international beauty titles, and of course punched our way to the boxing world. Our people compete and win every day in every imaginable job the world," the President said.

"Individually, we've taken on the world and won; together we must take on the challenges of creating a more powerful, humane and competitive nation and people," she said.

Ms Arroyo also condemned the unsolved killings of hundreds of people, mostly left-wing activists. "In the 'hardest possible terms I condemn political killings. We urge salesmen to come forward, together we will stop meaningful killings," said the President.

Hail to Palparan

Militants and their many of the killings to Army Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan.

But the President saluted the controversial general for his iron-fisted approach to insurgency. "We will end the long-operation of harassers by rebel terrorists who kill without qualms even their own," she said.

"In the 7th division area of responsibility, Jovito Palparan has come to grips with the enemy. He will not let go until the communities in the long night of terror emerge into the light of law and freedom," Ms Arroyo said.

Allies to get funds

To ensure that her allies in local government get their funds and the implementation of elections is financed in the face of the failure to pass the 2006 budget, the President pushed for the approval of the supplemental budget.

Economy growing

She said there was a lot to feel good about the country.

"Our economy is growing over the longest period in the last quarter century—22 quarters of continuous growth; the real wages of workers have been gone by over 10 percent in the first three years of my administration; and the number of poor families dropped from 26 percent to 23 percent or equivalent to two million people freed from poverty," she said.

"According to Thornton and Pascagbayan, 79 percent of medium-size business owners are optimistic, the 38th most optimistic among 38 countries, just behind India, Ireland, South Africa and China," the President said.

GMA like CEO meeting, form

From page A1

There was Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, the new chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

There too was Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan, the controversial commander in Central Luzon (now Ms Arroyo). The top regional commander who has been criticized for alleged human rights abuses appeared unshaken by the attention, discipline smiling while remaining stoked.

The other generals, like Army chief Lt. Gen. Romeo Tolentino, rose to acknowledge their President's compliments.

166 rounds of applause

The President's 62-minute speech received 166 rounds of applause. That did not include the eight times she was cheered as she stepped up to the dais until she was through acknowledging the officials present.

The 166 applauses lasted 67 seconds and erupted after the 60th, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th, 101st, 102nd, 103rd, 104th, 105th, 106th, 107th, 108th, 109th, 110th, 111th, 112th, 113th, 114th, 115th, 116th, 117th, 118th, 119th, 120th, 121st, 122nd, 123rd, 124th, 125th, 126th, 127th, 128th, 129th, 130th, 131st, 132nd, 133rd, 134th, 135th, 136th, 137th, 138th, 139th, 140th, 141st, 142nd, 143rd, 144th, 145th, 146th, 147th, 148th, 149th, 150th, 151st, 152nd, 153rd, 154th, 155th, 156th, 157th, 158th, 159th, 160th, 161st, 162nd, 163rd, 164th, 165th, 166th.

'She must be afraid of her own people'

From page A1

To opposition leader Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., the excessively heavy security around the Batasan complex where Ms Arroyo delivered her State-of-the-nation address "border siege."

"She must be afraid of a phantom speaking to the people and being guarded by the police from her own people," Pimentel said.

The other to make this year's State security more stringent than usual came from the host himself, Senate President Manuel Villar, according to Emmanuel Alfaro, former deputy secretary for media relations.

Tightest in years

"You will notice it as soon as you enter the gate," said Alfaro, a former shooting blood pressure over the past two weeks normal to assess the rigidity of the security measures.

While Alfaro was talking to the reporters in his office, a metal detector was being installed.

"This is the tightest State in years," he conceded. "Almost like the Bush visit."

Not as Sir Monocle described the country in his speech (repeating the 13th Congress, "we almost became a former democracy," Alfaro added. (Story on Page A2.)

Mr Arroyo's traditional speech at the Batasan came two weeks after a bomb blast in Davao City and a plot by military rebels to stage violence during the Sona, including seizing lawmakers as hostages. The plot was supposedly gleaned from documents police said they found in a rebel safe house practically for the Batasan complex, in the neighboring Ellipse Circle.

Like isn't Right

It was also Ms Arroyo's second Sona since the "Hello—Garci" electronic recording scandal and her first since an alleged coup attempt in February.

At the Batasan itself, security measures previously reserved for were put in place, to the surprise of journalists and guests who normally breathe a sigh of relief at the yearly rite.

Save for the VIPs, almost everyone was subjected to up to three friskings and bag checks starting at the main gate—as though they were boarding an international flight.

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Vehicles were banned from the Batasan complex two weeks after the second check, the heavy still had to secure stickers on the other check before finally being allowed into the plenary building.

Locked in

The doors were shut and nobody was allowed to leave the building during the hour-long speech.

In and around the complex, a computer scan made up of the Philippine National Police Special Action Force, the Army the Presidential Security Group and the Metropolitan Police Service Batasan patrolled themselves conspicuously in spots never before considered part of their patrol zones.

According to Alfaro, cleaning crew members were also "prescreened" for the Sona.

Only the select

Measures implemented since 2002 also limited the number of people—congressmen, staff and media members alike—allowed on queue Ms Arroyo upon her arrival on the Batasan grounds and to see her sell.

"We've seen exit photographs

From page A1

of the crowds) and it was brilliant. Now you can clearly see who's really in the welcoming committee," Alfaro said.

1961 seat in Senate was the first to greet visitors and direct traffic at the main gate, while police minded the 10 desks. Army soldiers with long firearms manned the parking lots, covered walks and lobbies of other Batasan buildings.

Nothing like it

Outside Alfaro's office itself, three to four men in black combat uniforms seeing M-16 rifles stood guard. Alfaro couldn't remember having such a setup in past Sonas.

The PNP earlier said it would mobilize up to 16,000 personnel in Metro Manila alone to maintain peace and order in and outside the Batasan yesterday. The number was bigger by around 2,000 men the normal PNP contingent in the National Capital Region on a regular day.

What Bush saw in Manila for a few hours at Oct. 18, 2002, the PNP security blanket involved some 10,000 of its personnel.

For Ms Arroyo's Sona after the July 27, 2003, Oakwood mutiny—considered then the most serious challenge to her administration—the PNP only fielded 5,000 men.

Rosse Iringan at Ann Bayani Fabic said the July 7 raid on the supposed rebel safe house was a primary concern of his office's security preparations.

Up to 1,000 personnel from the police and military—dubbed "Task Force Sandstorm"—secured the Batasan grounds, he said.

He said the House "Defense Plan" included contingency measures in case of unwanted events, such as the use of armored vehicles, barrage-taking, emergency evacuation, or a bomb attack. He declined to give details.

Fabic said his office had ample time to draw up the plans, as early as last May 15. —With reports from Joella C. Balbuena and Norman Bordadora

...e at board ...nal dance

...gallery see to the side left. ...ators they are their packed ...ers in previous times.

...their place in the upper ...ry were mostly demand... elected governors, city and ...delegates and other in... guests. The men came in ...ng "Barong and skirt, the ...ers in the traditional Filipina ...s or formal dress.

...ere was no clash of colors ...ions.

...st year, opposition groups ...ved guests in their color ... arguably chair element to be ...h Mr. Arroyo. The President's ...s then had come in blue in ...e of the Virgin Mary to ...n they had prayed for help ...ir beleaguered President.

...ay-color and was the weekend ..., with the President herself ...ed in alluming red gown.

...ing champ

...ntinental Chief of Staff Mike ...ence secured world boxing ...champion Manny Pacquiao into ...alls of the House.

...e here to support GMA," ...ation declared.

...mer Rep. Jose "Peping" Co... ...ges came with his wife Mito ...'s "Pinging" Cojuangco. Pior ...the right, Cojuangco hosted a ... to his Makati residence for a ...p of businessmen and civil so... ...nalysts allegedly plotting ...ouster of Mr. Arroyo.

...of confidence

...executive Secretary Eduardo ...a said the July 7 arrest of six ...r soldiers contributed to the ...ally atmosphere at the Sona. ...ts were allegedly plotting to ... Congress and take hostage. ...ssage during the President's ...ress.

...he air is full of confidence. ...The President did not even ... to take a dig at her detrac... ...Arroyo told the lawmakers at ...reakfast after the Senator's ...ch.

...mmenting the success of her ...ident-free congress, Mr Ar... talked on how Balangiga ...n grandson, Jacob.

...ording to the President, ...ngga is a former fighter of ...Cordillera People's Liberation ...(CPLA), the rebel group led ...e late Conrado Balweg that ...d a peace pact with the gov... ...ent in 1986.

...n April, Ilonggans finally put ...ide to his land 20 years after ...ssigning of the peace ac... ...With a report from Mel ...ynay de Guzman, Pitt Ro... ...h

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Good or bad?

EDITORIAL

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO, IN HER STATE of the Nation Address yesterday, was expected to give a glowing account of the economic situation of the nation. We will comment on her report tomorrow, but today we will give our readers just statistics and information and let them decide for themselves whether the state of the nation is good or bad.

The gross national product grew 5.0 percent in the first quarter of this year, compared with 4.9 percent last year. Gross domestic product grew 5.5 percent in the same period compared with 4.2 percent last year. Exports in January to April 2006 totaled $14.0 billion, compared to $12.8 billion in the same period in 2005, or a 15.8 percent increase.

The budget deficit decreased to P146.8 billion in 2005 from P187.1 billion in 2004. It was only P31.5 billion in the first semester of this year.

Foreign direct investments rose to P63.5 billion in the first quarter of 2006 from P31.5 billion in the first quarter of 2005, or a 102-percent quarter-on-quarter increase.

The average peso-dollar exchange rate in June 2006 was P53.16 to $1, compared with P55.18 to $1 in 2005. The remittances of overseas Filipino workers from January to May 2006 totaled $4.9 billion, up 14.0 percent compared to the year-ago level.

In June 2006 the inflation rate was 6.7 percent, compared to 7.6 percent in June 2005. The apparent decrease, however, is illusory, because the cessation rise in the prices of oil products to the pump six months has had a domino effect, triggering increases in the prices of practically all goods and services.

In 2003, 24 out of every 100 families did not earn enough to satisfy even basic food and non-food requirements. This is not a slight improvement from the 2003 situation wherein 28 out 100 families experienced income shortfall, the National Statistical Coordination Board said.

According to the Philippine Labor Force Survey, total employment in April 2006 grew by 2.5 percent, resulting in a national employment rate of 91.5 percent. But this figure is disputable, because in April 2005 a new definition of unemployment was adopted by the NSCB. If the employment picture here is good, why is it that every year hundreds of thousands of Filipinos leave for work abroad? As of December 2004 overseas Filipino workers were estimated at 8 million, and every year the total is growing by close to 900,000.

The departure of hundreds of thousands of Filipinos abroad is aggravating the brain drain. Dr. Ita Gatmo, Philippine Medical Association president, said 30 percent of the country's registered doctors have migrated to North America. Since 1994, more than 100,000 nurses have left the country, according to Dr. Bernardo Sandoval, executive director of the Association of Philippine Medical Colleges.

Carl Mare Ranoco, quoting reports from Migrante International, said about 28 percent of the 160,000 Filipinos working as domestic help in Hong Kong, Singapore and the Middle East are former teachers. The emigration is continuing because of the lack of good job opportunities in the Philippines.

The shortage of 6,832 classrooms has supposedly been remedied, but only because the President applied creative math: the pupil-classroom ratio was increased from 45 to 1 to 100 to 1 under a two-shift schedule of classes.

Because of a continuously decreasing health budget, the public health sector can now be said to be in an emergency room. Usually treatable diseases like tuberculosis, cholera, diarrhea and measles end up killing thousands of people due to lack of doctors and hospitals and the high prices of medicines.

Because of widespread poverty, more and more women and children are falling victims to white slavery. Government agencies and NGOs estimate that from 300,000 to 400,000 women and from 60,000 to 100,000 children are being trafficked annually.

From July 2005 to June 2006 there were 6,206 murders, 7,798 robberies, 12,233 assaults and 3,766 rapes. In 2006 there were 34 kidnapping cases.

Corruption continues to be a way of life in government. Up to now, for instance, very little has been done about the P726-million fertilizer scandal, the P1.3-billion contract of the Comelec with Mega Pacific eSolutions for automated polling machines and the $2-million bribery charge against former Justice Secretary Hernando Perez.

The death penalty has been abolished, but extrajudicial killings continue unabated: since 2001, 41 journalists and 238 leftists and activists have been killed.

Has there been any change in the state of the nation since 2001 or even in the past year?

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Kids as Sona

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

EVER HEARD OF "BRIGANTI-SAW"? IT IS THE toughest sex-offender registry law in the United States. New Jersey adopted it after 7-year-old Megan Kanka was raped, then murdered, by a twice-convicted child molester who moved into the house across her home.

The law requires that citizens be warned when dangerous sex offenders are freed. Members of parliament from the United Kingdom visited New Jersey to see how the "Megan Law" worked, the British Broadcasting Corp. reported.

Indeed, the license not for any country is how it treats children. The BBC report underscores how certain agonies children face spread worldwide. The Philippines, for example, "is a source, transit and destination country for men, women and children trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation," and forced labor, "the US State Department's "Trafficking in Persons Report 2005" pointed out.

The 2006 report did observe "initial progress" here. The number of prosecutions were inched up, but convictions were sparse. Republic Act 9208 (Antiage 2003 penalizes sex trafficking. In May 20, Senators Sharpened Arroyo signed the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006.

Under Republic Act 9344, children 15 years and below are exempt from criminal liability. Those aged 15 to 18 years may be criminally charged only if it is shown they had discernment when they are asked of the law.

Showing pictured kids into the dungeon, often jammed with hardened criminals, is now banned. They're instead sent to social workers. Cases are referred to rehabilitation programs, instead of old courts.

These laws are fine, as they go. But it took all of nine years for church and non-governmental organizations to lobby for enactment of RA 9344, the juvenile justice bill. As beneficiaries, children are voiceless, unable to protest and refuse to vote.

Many officials, however, heed only those who present bonbon. "The squealing wheel gets the grease," the old saying goes. So, was it that the "crying coat of boys (blazer) that did the trick?

In August 2005, CNN and TV5 aired stark images of thousands of Filipino kids, held in cells, overcrowded jails. Even Rogers drew unusual cases of children physically and sexually abused by adult inmates, some of them accustomed visitors to the cells.

The footage sparked a torrent of outraged protests here and abroad. In a February 2006 follow-up telecast, Rogers said his team assumed that children continued to be abused. Only then did the President (scold) an unjust the hill in Congress.

And what of young lives wrecked while politicians dither? Gordon: *What is the hell minority all by official deadness? "Can you hear who child, does crying, a my brothers / We will we some sons such his years,"* asks Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

No name anything, fears must be lengthened all. The "Megan Law" a Cabinet News Service investigation found, stands as "one of the weakest in the nation" because of lax implementation and that is true, too, for our least of abused kids. "Laws are like cobwebs," Jonathan Swift wrote. "They catch small flies but let wasps and hornets break through."

The Juvenile Justice Law has resulted in more children released. Pro-bo Foundation, for example, got charges against 22 dismissed. Now, 14 are installed in formal school. But over six screening informal truancy situation. If they were to Cebu City, they'd be targeted by vigilantes there City Hall toddlers.

But overall, implementation is slow. There's money for a 500 replenished pork barrel. But the government has only a handful of poorly staffed recovery and rehabilitation centers. Crucial Lacson has not pursued purely state-aged government home for trafficked girls. Child Shepherd centers and other religious groups operate.

"Hardly any are helped to bring charges against their traffickers," the Pedia Foundation notes. The Department of Social Welfare needs must better. "They are most trafficked again. Many have no parents to turn to. Others are sent children by the police, labor or social welfare departments. We had for torture," officials say.

The most insidious problem is the apple (case thing). says Fr. Shay Cullen whose life has been devoted to protecting kids. All too often, he told government officials and parents assumes for "compensation" by the sex molesters. "Making an *apple* is a common practice." Local officials pocket most of the money and give parents a pittance.

The parents don't realize that they are, in reality, prostituting their child. And so are the officials. But the abuser goes free to molest more children."

Cullen cites the case of 6-year-old Annie. Pedia staff had rescued her. Then, "we found out that the angels or parent was made. The parents took her and begged all relatives."

"We have him in prison awaiting trial," Cullen says. "He faces life in prison if convicted... We taken incontrollable death threats from his powerful relatives and friends."

Yesterday, the President delivered her presidential up-beat State of the Nation Address. And just as predictably, the opposition derided her assessment. Isn't that another classic exchange between those who vent devil in the right of orphans and relish the tears of children?

Poor children, including the ravaged Annie, like Megan, are the truest icons. They're the valid yardstick to measure all our actions by.

Thank God for Bishop Tobias

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

YOU JUST HAVE TO stand up and applaud. When the other people being implicated by the coup plot have denied the charges against them, Bishop Antonio Tobias has gone right out and freely admitted he gave aid and comfort to 11 Lieutenant San Jose. Why shouldn't he? At the time he did, San Jose was still a very idealistic young man who wanted to change the world. Or at least who wanted to change his country by way of putting an end to the government-controlled.

Bishop Tobias did say with absolute candor when he admitted his "crime" that it was Church practice to give succor to those who sought it, a practice that dated back to when the enemies of the government-ground would with refuge in churches during Spanish times. Even the government-ground balked at the thought of violating the sanctity of churches and left well enough alone. Certainly the last thing they did was punish the murmurs-givers, even if they swelled at the thought and contemplated all sorts of ways, not least more taxes, by which they might get back at the priests.

Unfortunately, Bishop Tobias cannot profess truly deserve to have that stubbornly lofty title permanently affixed before their names) has refused to justify his deed. And rightly so. Why should he justify a holier conscience like that? Conscience tells us to justify his crimes before personal as much as official, before God and man to begin with? Unlike Ulds, Bishop Tobias did not say, "God has put me here." He is not that presumptuous. He has merely said, "I will not put up one defense. Let the country be my judge." Unlike Ulds, Bishop Tobias knows that in a democracy at least it is easy to hear the voice of God. The principle is not, "vox Dei, vox diaries," or "the voice of God is the voice of Gerry," it is "vox populi, vox Dei," or "the voice of the people is the voice of God."

It was tempered in light of this to have a T shirt made with the words, "I am ... guilty" printed on it, the second dots meant to recall the acronym: "I ... am ... sorry," in order to show equally freely that I am as guilty as Bishop Tobias of the "crime" in thought if not in deed. And to cajole the rest of the world to wear the same T-shirt to express the judgment they have rendered upon the good Bishop. Well, maybe somebody will be fun to do it.

But, yes, I am guilty of the "crime" too. I have never bothered to hide the fact that I most earnestly want the present illegitimate government, or more accurately the current coup regime, ended. My own preference is through the people power route (an evil disdain there, but I do not mind other means on the call-important) proviso that other means afterward a step elections and not any government or second, permanent or transitional. I have no wish to help end unconstrained authority only to put up another one. The only solution is an unelected government or an elected one.

Find San Juan sought shelter in my 72-square-meter sanctuary housing in Pasay (grandly called "condominium" by the Bureau of Housing authority, poolside with much more glare), I'd have gladly given it to him. Our own bedroom might even look good enough space for him, but he would have been welcome to the sofa in the sala, in front and rear amply hidden by a thick curtain cloth, in the company of excellent CDs, excellent DVDs, and even more excellent books. The offer remains good for either "coup plotters."

Which brings me to the one thing that is totally outrageous in all this. Frankly, I would like for Gordon to summon me to shed light on anything, including his ignorance, because I would like to say to him that unless he and the rest of the senators can produce the evidence to justify the Senate has been summoning to shed light on honest wrongdoing in this country, I see no reason why I should. Frankly, I cannot understand why the people being summoned by the civilian and military authorities to shed light on the Double Line's withdrawal of support shouldn't just say that to Gen of appearing. To this day, despite the Supreme Court's ruling, RD Mike Arroyo, the government refuses to allow witnesses, both unwilling and willing, to materialize before the Senate to testify to humongous probity. The excuse of the unwilling is that they are busy doing important governmental work. Like what – lying, shooting and strolling around with their wives? I don't know why the people being summoned by the justice department and the National Bureau of Investigation shouldn't just say that they have better things to do than answer the ill-intended. Or that they are busy planning some more.

The Senate on Monday is threatening Bishop Tobias with jail for giving succor and sanctuary to lawbreakers? My dear men, aren't that what you, the whole of Malacañang and the whole of the Department of Foreign Affairs, just did to that self-confessed lawbreaker? And what about Fernando Poe Jr.'s? No, more than that, appropriate, employ and devote the entire resources of government to hide criminals from justice. Just look at their faces, men, and see if "mandarajap" isn't written on their foreheads.

The Senate is seven by US immigration standards hadn't been locked up in cells, it would have remained undercover to the public. The only thing we may be thankful about in his case is that he at least earned say that he was nevertelling abroad, he was best all the time, it's not his fault if no one could see him. Though the Senate has been trying to make him visible to the point of paranoia, dolores can always see, it wasn't him that was arrested in the US, it was Willie Sep. He was here all the while—Gerry can testify to it, they were together.

There was once a king Alexander told Bishop Tobias that was not just being unreliable to being unreliably funny. "Me, he taunted. "Is above the law."

It only he would grasp the concept.

Courting the LGUs

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cantoria

AS THIS COLUMN WAS BEING WRITTEN, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's State of the Nation Address (SoNAs) was due the next day, as never before, for greater autonomy for local governments units in some kind of federal system. This wouldn't be unnerving. Since the restored democratic form of government in 1986, GMA has encountered the rapture of the LGUs. One of the first things she did was to return the portion of the LGU internal revenue allotment of about P4 billion that had been withheld by former President Estrada and released to congressmen sportsmen. Over the last few years, the President has been going around the country more since, distributing infrastructure projects to six cities or municipalities that do not necessarily and remotely QUIP provide the cash-narrowed rural spending.

The LGUs have reciprocated her by their unwithering support. The most solid supporter of the 1.7 million members of the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP) has been the source of 600-to 800-plus power through various coup attempts as well as skirmishes for her reign. Not that ULAP is always also there for the arrogance for the administration's Clinton change campaign, as well as the inner mechanisms for the people's initiative which is said to have at least 6 million signatures for the constitutional amendments. The 6,000+ combined line acceptance and numerical defense ratings, as shown by the recent Pulse Asia poll, show that the LGUs tend to project many the administration's positive.

There's a practical side to GMA's nonlocal ownship. The opposition claims that the 2001 mid-term elections will be a referendum on her administration's performance. Of the 17 senatorial seats at stake, 13 GMA needs the support of the LGUs to get a comfortable majority of congressmen at either—as members of the new parliament, as the case may be—elected. And of House Speaker Jose de Venecia's 220 members, 80 are solidly pro-GMA. It is to need a third impeachment in 2007, she needs maintaining control of the House. This has made the opposition fretful that GMA would resort to massive administration programs in time for the campaign, and that also the efforts of some to declare the "Edsa Junior" and the "Edsa-yon Bonapart" grassroots funds from the 2004 budget.

With Israeli tanks and armed forces going deeper into southern Lebanon, it can be foreseen that the crisis in the Middle East would be prolonged, despite the efforts of various groups, and world leaders, on the eve of the visit to the Middle East over the weekend, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was quoted as saying that she was not keen on pressing for a ceasefire, as it could only mean renewed and prolonged violence. This makes it important for the Department of Energy to intensify efforts to develop alternative fuels programs. This would appear to be prophetic for President Arroyo.

The DOE has already announced that it is targeting the country to generate self-sufficient by 2004, through the use of such abundant domestic agricultural products as sugar, coconut, cassava and corn. Currently, the country imports 40% of its fuel requirements. A transfer from other sources will provide information about the various companies offering incentives, and how to go about applying for a franchise. Interested parties may call DOE Franchise Developers at 752-8286.

An interesting evening

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

SATURDAY EVENING PROMISED TO BE THE proverbial "dark and rainy night," but it was also certain to turn out to be an interesting evening.

It began with a cocktail party in honor of Gil dee Cordero Fernando, writer-publisher extraordinaire, the ex-producer, ex-second cousin (about) and now ambassador-host author. I'd been invited to watch a three-hour rehearsal of the reading of "Jungle and the Empty Room," which will be the highlight of the Sandaraw of Bibliography, now host "Bad Bugs" on Thursday, July 27, 8 p.m. at the Podium.

The cocktail was one the nicest prepared by Gil, Ate Nelly Yuchengco, and Ambassador Yuchengco in the company of some of the most distinguished personages in the country: National Artist for Literature Virgilio Almario, Nacionalista Party Secretary-General Jesus Dureza, Philippine Embassy Counselor Jose Victor Chatto, Philippine Embassy Counselor Jose Victor Chatto, Philippine Embassy Counselor Jose Victor Chatto

Gov no authority to issue quarry permits

LETTERS

THIS IS A RESPONSE TO THE letter of Ms. Gladys C. Sto. Nino, administrator of Bataan's provincial government (INQ, 7/15/06).

• The provincial government has no authority to issue a quarry permit inside mineral reservations without prior clearance from the secretary of the environment and natural resources.

In the case of the Bish na Bato Mineral Reservation, Proclamation No. 414 clearly states that the reservation, along with the Bish na Bato Wildlife Park and Watershed Forest Reserve, shall be under the direct control and administration of the DENR secretary. Sec. 5 of the Philippine Mining act of 1995 also clearly states that "Mining operations in existing mineral reservations and such other reservations as may thereafter be established, shall be undertaken by the Department or through a contractor." Sec. 23 of the implementing rules and regulations of the Mining Act states that government reservations are closed to mining applications unless prior written clearance by the agency concerned is secured.

• The provincial governor has no authority to issue a quarry permit inside watershed forest reserves, since these areas are closed to mining applications.

The Bish na Bato Watershed Forest Reserve is closed to mining, pursuant to the provisions of Sec. 23 a.2 of the implementing rules and regulations of the Mining Act, inquoted.

• The following areas are closed to mining applications: (a) 2,000 growth or virgin forests, proclaimed watershed forest reserves, wilderness areas, timberproduction, water parks, etc.

• The Provincial Mining Regulatory Board or PMRB is a body that is functionally within the jurisdiction of the Office of the Provincial Governor. Its main function is to evaluate and recommend to the governor applications for quarry permit, among other permits that are within the authority of the governor. In effect, while the regional director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau acts as chair of the board, his actions are all within the direct control and supervision of the provincial governor.

• The cancellation of quarry permits issued by the governor in the Bish na Bato Mineral Reservation is very relevant to the suspension of the operating operation of Rosemarie Sto. Iloilo de la Cruz must remember that the bigger issue is the respect of all operating agreements on Bish na Bato. Any quarry permit issued in the area has no respect on Bish na Bato.

• The statement that the governor is authorized to issue exclusive clearance supersedes all other DENR memorandum circulars, Order No. 30, s. 1990 is grossly wrong.

That order directed the regional directors to issue ECCs only under Executive 20, a government program that has long expired and ended. At the moment, only the President, environment secretary and the Environmental Management Bureau regional director possess the authority to issue ECCs.

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—BERNARDO C. ILUSORIO, director
Mines and Geosciences Bureau, North Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City

Lipa bishop's moral lapse

LIPA CITY ARCHBISHOP RAMON Arguelles humorously exhibited a moral lapse when he admitted that President Macapagal-Arroyo cheated in the 2004 presidential election. (PDI, 7/14/06) If Archbishop Arguelles confessed that Mrs. Arroyo cheated, then he should have supported the impeachment complaints against GMA. After all, electoral cheating constitutes a "betrayal of the public trust."

But he added: everybody else cheated ("Lahat naman nagdaya, eh. Aanhin nang isang tao sa akusasyon"). Is that supposed to exculpate the President?

The archbishop has no basis to declare that "all" cheated, for there were certainly those who could not or would not cheat. Indeed the claim that "everyone cheats in an election" is used by GMA's spokesperson to absolve her from her sin of cheating. Did Mrs. Arroyo's spokesperson, Sergio Ortiz-Luis, Jr., Jesus Macapagal, Carlos Garcia or even Cleto Suber, President Macapagal, cheat in the presidential elections? If people cheat, they should be punished. But should the cheat not be?

Sadly it appears that archbishop Arguelles' apology for GMA is the underlying rationale for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines' refusal to support the impeachment "unless the persons and members of all political parties are guided by an ethical motive that promotes concern for the common good." This suggests that only the bishops have "genuine reasons for the common good."

Jose Rizal pointed out that the Spanish colonial government in the Philippines, which was supported by the religious authorities, was not run out of a "genuine concern for the common good" of the native inhabitants of these islands. Let the religious work to strengthen the faith and leave politics to politicians and the voters. For all politicians are bad, just as not all priests lack moral integrity.

—MANUEL F. LABRADOR, mlabrador@yahoo.com

GSIS clarifies eCards enrollment issues

THIS IS IN RESPONSE TO THE letter of Grace Ramos (PDI, 7/14/06) who raised the following issues:

1. The first-named issue is on the system should government employees not yet enrolled in the eCard system be allowed to enroll at the GSIS branch offices for convenience.

2. The GSIS did not make good on its promise to make the eCard operational for withdrawals of monthly pensions from any Philippine commercial bank.

Allow us to reply.

On the first issue, the process for enrollment in the eCard is actually the third phase of the eCard program for the employees' pool. The enrollment process was launched in mid-2005 at the GSIS central office. It was replicated in GSIS field offices in January 2006. It was designed in a way that pensioners can only enroll for their eCards at their servicing GSIS offices. Thus, for instance, pensioners receiving their pensions from the GSIS Quezon City Field Office can only enroll for their eCards in that office.

If a pensioner has moved to a locality outside the coverage of his original servicing GSIS office, he/she may request a change of servicing office—that which has jurisdiction over the town or city where he/she now resides. Once the transfer is effected, the pensioner can enroll for eCard in his/her new servicing GSIS office.

Likewise, in gathering pensioner-enrollment data for the eCard, there are several things that are considered—not only the need to transfer the computer equipment but also the number of pensioners who have to be served. Enrollment centers are put up in the GSIS office premises to allow the access to as many pensioners as possible. If Ramos can point to us the satellite office he/she is interested, we can check on the number of pensioners in the area and, if warranted, we can recommend adaptive/plus upgrading.

On the second issue, from the start of the enrollment process, pensioners are advised by the GSIS that they will continue receiving their pension checks by mail, up to the time their eCards shall have been released to them and until such time they shall have been notified as to when the eCard crediting will be fully operational for pensioners. The GSIS never promised that the monthly pensions will immediately be credited to the pensioners' eCard accounts. We are aware that the electronic crediting of pension and loans to pensioners will start on January 2007 yet.

Both expressed in line, however, did mention that with the eCard's creation, individual savings accounts are automatically created for the enrolling pensioners, which they can then use for their own transactions—such as making deposits to their savings accounts and/or withdrawing their personal funds via ATMs.

We take this note of Ramos' concern on the personal appearance required of pensioners during their birth month, but we would like to underscore that this procedure is a monitoring mechanism to check on the status of our pensioners.

—EDILBERTO S. EDRADAN, ECP operations, Investment and Privatization Group, GSIS

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of non-employees by the hospital, you may write to the Readers Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, China Bank Avenue, corner Ilaya and Masangkay Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to No. 897-4793, 897-4794, or e-mail: readersadvocate@ inquirer.com.ph

All letters addressed to the editor are requested to include their complete address and a telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Stage for grandstanding, distraction from real problems

THE ABOLITION OF THE DEATH penalty in the Philippines just provided the country with a distraction from the real problems it harbors—and the President with a stage for quite grandstanding.

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo could not care less on this dare.

Of course, she cares about who sees love. Some of them are her supporters, like the influential and well-connected Bishop Bacani, who is assured of multiple murder but who no longer has to worry about the death penalty. People like him will now always a big force that they will have to cope in the future. The icing on the unexpected presentation to the Pope of a copy of the law abolishing death penalty.

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The soldiers claim they are being killed by their own comrades in the New People's Army.

Nobody has been punished for these murders. And one thing sure, those responsible for these crimes will not be meted out the death penalty, if and when they ever get arrested.

There is now a Rizal bicentennial in the country. It's not only the military and police who are criminals in our midst anymore.

Meanwhile, ordinary Filipinos have to make a living. They will determine what happens to MrArroyo and the country in the next two years leading to the 2007 elections. Allegations and allusions change, so Mr Arroyo is not yet home free.

—EUPHROSE LAC. IGNACIO, banderia@yahoo.ca

Across the NATION

E. Visayas needs ₱60B for 'super region' plan

By Joey A. Gabieta
INQ Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—EASTERN Visayas needs about P60 billion to implement all the local projects identified under the "super region" program of the national government, according to the National Economic and Development Authority.

The bulk of the amount will be used to geothermal power exploration in southern Leyte and Biliran, as well as the rehabilitation of the Daniel Z. Romualdez (DZR) Airport here, said Buenaventura Go Jimi, Biliran regional chief.

Southern Leyte Gov. Rosette Lerias has proposed a P19-billion funding for the exploration and development of geothermal power in San Juan town. The project could generate about 50 megawatts of electricity.

Biliran Gov. Napoleon Espina sought a funding of P2 billion to explore the potential geothermal power source in Caibiran town, which had a potential capacity of 20 megawatts.

About P3.2 billion is needed for the improvement of the DZR Airport, the region's premier airport. "Biliran" airports in Tacloban City in Leyte, Calbayog City in Samar, and Surigao in Eastern Samar will be developed or access or moved from P200 million.

The rest of the P60-billion proposed budget will be used to upgrade national roads, highways and bridges, including a 21-km viaduct in Sogod town in Southern Leyte worth about P600 million.

Eastern Visayas is among the five regions included in Central Philippines, one of the four "super regions" envisioned by President Macapagal-Arroyo. The other regions of Central Philippines are Southern Tagalog, Central Visayas, Bicol and Mindanao (Misamis-Surigao-Agusan-Palawan).

Go Jimi, whose office initiated all the project proposals submitted by the six provinces of Eastern Visayas, said the provincial executives were optimistic that all the projects could be implemented.

The projects are "doable" and can help spur regional development, Lerias said. One of the most depressed regions in the country, Eastern Visayas is composed of Leyte, Southern Leyte, Biliran, Samar, Eastern Samar and Northern Samar.

Go Jimi said it would be up to the provinces to follow up their proposed projects with the President.

"Us Jimi can approach a politician member of Cabinet or their congressmen will ask for support," he said.

The Bicol official noted "a feeling among provinces that some provinces would be getting a bigger pie."

Leyte Gov. Jocelyn Petilla, in an earlier radio interview, had raised apprehension that Eastern Visayas could be left behind other developed regions as the Visayas, where some provinces supported to have bigger fund allocations. He did not elaborate.

Head of nurse group linked to test leaks

BACOLOD CITY—NURSING SCHOOLS HERE have asked the Philippine Nurses Association (PNA) to count her as president for overseeing an exposé of the licensing that caused the June 11 and 12 licensure examinations to be stolen.

The officers of the Carlos Hilado Memorial (HLH) College of Nursing and the Silliman College School of Nursing accused Grenge Gaudiez, PNA president, of attempting to suppress a report about alleged test leakages that attended the examinations administered by the Professional Regulatory Commission (PRC).

Minority-state examinees have demanded the suspension of the Board of Nursing members and the delay in the release of the June 11 and 12 test results until it has independent fact-finding body investigates the cheating.

Eudes College Dean Ruth Pinglin, who is a PNA governor, and SLU Dean Maria Grace Lumanta, who is chapter president of the Association of Deans of Philippine Colleges of Nursing (ADCN), are also using Gaudiez today (July 25, Tuesday) at the Regent county for obstruction of justice because, they said, his telephone calls suggested that he was attempting to cover up.

Licensure and the involved teleclones calls from Gaudiez saying her co-conspirators on the scandal purportedly to avoid distributing negotiations with the American National Council of State Boards of Nursing to a Philippine testing center that will offer reviewing, across the United States National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX).

The licensure board of the decision have also received digital copies of reports that "directly implicate Gaudiez in an industry-wide whitewash."

The leakages were first exposed when the Regent complainants sent photocopies of an 18-page document that contained handwritten test questions and answers.

The copies belonged to nursing licensure applicants who were cashiers jockeys of the R.A. Gaspar Review Center. Those applicants had shared their copies with reviewers, who then alerted Rizanna Sison-ona, PNA Regent president and former nursing school dean of the University of the Cordillera.

Sison-ona then turned the leakage over to members of the nursing board but only recommended that they be charged with grave negligence.

In the PRC last finding report, a copier claimed she lost her two questions when she had them photocopied in Manila, while another reporter claimed that her test questions were stolen.

A hundred of test questions is doubted based on their resemblances. Vincent Cabreza, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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Church protest ignored as STL gets go signal

By Hector P. Bürgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—THE CITY COUNCIL has given the go-signal for the operation of Small Town Lottery (STL) amid opposition from the Catholic Church.

In a resolution passed during its regular session last week, the council said the public hearings conducted last month showed that the majority of those who responded were in favor of the operation of the numbers game.

It cited the report of the committee on games, amusement and professional sports, chaired by Councilor Jerry Treñas, that conducted public hearings on June 19, 21, 25 and 30. The hearings were attended by barangay officials, residents, representatives from transport organizations, the academe and religious groups, and professionals.

The resolution, authored by Councilor Eduardo Peñarredondo, said the STL was being "sensible" to the city that could be responsible "if the game is operating clandestinely or illegally."

The council supported the committee report pointing out that the STL operation could provide employment to agents and employees, revenue earning, and generate jobs.

It would also provide revenues for the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO), Bureau of Internal Revenue, and the city government, the council said in its resolution.

Under PCSO rules, 30 percent of the gross sales will go to the city or municipality, 3 percent to the franchisee, 2.5 percent to the dealers, 5 percent to Philippine National Police, 1.5 percent to the PCSO, and 13 percent in operating funds.

The resolution endorsed to the PCSO the application of Iloilo Small Town Lottery and Gaming Corp. (ISTLGC) and other applicants to operate the STL.

A resolution from local government seat favoring the STL is required by the PCSO in granting permission to corporations to operate the game in a locality.

The city government granted a business permit to ISTLGC on May 3. Another group, Town Mainland Multi Investors Corp. is applying to operate the STL in the city, but the PCSO allows only one corporation to operate in a cited area at any time.

Mayor Jerry Treñas said he would support the stand of the city council.

Gov. Niel Tupas Jr. earlier said he would oppose and block the entry of STL in the province. Iloilo has 42 towns and one city.

Tupas had said he did not "share government propaganda that the STL will re-allocate the 6 legal numbers game.

"Monday the STL is opened will only erode the moral values of the people, and made them to consider their future which instead of working hard to earn a livelihood," Tupas said in a letter to the Jaro Archdiocese.

The Archdiocese of Jaro headed by Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, is opposing the STL operation.

"If the government cannot even curb illegal gambling, how will we, we trust it to find solutions to widespread corruption?" read a statement issued earlier by more than 140 priests in the province. Iloilo.

"Is the government willing to charge her way to solve his problem is to make it legal? If the government cannot provide its people with a more decent and productive lifestyle, then something must be wrong with its leadership."

ILIANT CHORE
Farmers take advantage of the rainy season to plant their main crop, rice, in lowland and non-irrigated farms in Ramgam, Pangasinan.

DILG chief Puno sacks 2 ARMM Napolcom execs

COTABATO CITY—INTERIOR Secretary Rodolfo Puno ordered the dismissal from the government service of two officials of the National Police Commission (Napolcom) in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) for their involvement in misappropriation of funds.

Puno, also Napolcom chief, ordered the dismissal of Jamil Macbil, administrative officer II, and budget officer III Ismael Bahagan after choosing on the administrative charges.

A few years ago, employees of the Napolcom-ARMM secured Macbil, Bahagan, administrative Officer V Waylito Lucandas and cashier Iris Yvonne Mae Go of pocketing P114,000 in generic name funds.

The Napolcom's Inspection, Monitoring and Investigation Service, after verifying the complaint, recommended the creation of an ad hoc committee to investigate the case.

The investigation took several months to complete.

Datu Ibrahim, Napolcom vice chair and executive officer, said in statements Saturday that the filing of an administrative case against the officials was not only based on the complaints but was also based on facts brought about by the investigation.

He said after a judicial evaluation of the case records, the Napolcom en banc agreed with the findings of the ad hoc committee, which found the four "guardians of" from guilty of dishonesty.

Bases said dishonesty is considered a grave offense and punishable by dismissal from the service on first offense.

"The Napolcom en banc ruled that the case against the said respondents was substantially proven in the formal investigation where they admitted that they participated either by signing, receiving or releasing of funds without the appropriate legal authority and supporting documents thereby negating their claim of regularity in the performance of duty and good faith," the said.

Explaining why only two of the officials were ordered dismissed, Bases said the case against Lucandas has become moot and academic because she was already terminated from the government service in 1998 by the Civil Service Commission (CSC).

"The commission has lost jurisdiction over respondent Go since she has already transferred to the Halipawan Registry of Deeds on June 16, 1998," Bases said. Arlyn Fay Malvar, PDI Mindanao Bureau

15 hurt in NPA land mine blast in Surigao Sur

By Bert Pacalo
PDI Mindanao Bureau

TANDAG, SURIGAO DEL SUR—The war on communist guerrillas by the Aquino administration got exposed to report from an anti-communist group that set the guerrillas restrained their attacks on government targets, but wounded 15 civilians when two land mines they planted exploded on a highway in a village in Tago, this province.

Senior Airman Jr., head of the anti-communist group Alliance for Reconciliation and Democracy (Arnad), said in a statement that Barangay Dalipuga Gamay was among the five of the wounded were passengers of a jeep that was passing by when the mines blew up.

The rest of the victims were walking, Tanggero said.

Arnad's spokesperson, who identified herself as Maria Mabaya, quoted the victims as saying that the explosion shook the ground and the rebels who detonated the mines mistook the jeepney for military vehicle.

The victims were brought to the Adela Serra ty Ehrmental Hospital for treatment.

In his statement, Airman said Mr. Aquino's issuance of EO 546, which expands the role of the PNP and the local government in the campaign against communist guerrillas, spelled out the government's "relentless approach" in decisively dealing with the insurgency.

Army Lt. Mike Tanggero, spokesperson of the 58th Infantry Battalion based in Tandag, said five of the wounded were passengers of a jeep that was passing by when the mines blew up.

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Cagayan cop chief denies brod's role in 'jueteng'

BAGUIO, ISABELA—THE POLICE chief in Cagayan Valley has denied police reports linking his brother to "jueteng" operations in Cagayan and Quirino.

Chief Supt. Jefferson Soriano called the reports malicious, saying it would be improper for him to allow his brother to engage in illegal gambling because of his position as police director in the region.

"Why are they maliciously dragging the name of my brother (Junior Soriano, operational? When is my defendant if I would allow such acts in the area where I am the regional police director?" said Soriano.

Danny Soriano's name was included in the Philippine National Police (PNP) list of suspected jueteng operators in the region.

Soriano's supporters said that his detractors had been peddling such stories to discredit him and drive him out of his post.

Senior Supt. James Andrei Mobal, Cagayan police director, said Danny and the late Cagayan Rep. Rodolfo Aguinaldo used to sponsor the governor-appointed Small Town Lottery in the province in the 1990s.

Mobal said his information showed that Danny had not been involved in any resident after losing the STL franchise.

Mobal said jueteng financiers, who operate gambling operations in the provinces, came from either regions. He said he had ordered his men to monitor illegal gambling activities and arrest those involved.

Isabela Bishop Sergio Utleg said he opposed all forms of gambling activities in his province.

Utleg said the priests in the Diocese of Ilagan, which covers 28 towns and two cities, would continue to urge the people to fight jueteng and illegal gambling. Gil-lanor Hugua Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau, and Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Bureau

Squatters invade DA research facilities

THE NRCP for space by an ever growing population is eating up research facilities for farming in the Candidera, where a rice paddy in Buenos, Phi. Province is still tilled by traditional methods.

CONTINUED ON PAGE A15

MAGALO CITY—THE DEPARTment of Agriculture has accused the Department of Agrarian Reform and an attached assessment land selling agency of supporting squatters who have "invaded" some research farms in the city and in new Cotabato provinces.

The accusation was documented in a report to President Benigno Aquino that was discussed by Cabinet officials during a regional Development Council (RDC) meeting here on Tuesday.

The DA said officials of the DAR and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) had provided the squatters the resources to process their claims to ownership of the lands and research facilities in Sagada, Mountain Province, and in Luna, Apayao.

They asked the Cabinet to stop the DAR and the NCIP from processing private claims over government reservation "in the interest of public service."

Agrarian Undersecretary Narciso Nieto, NCIP Legal Bureau Director Emilio Wendag, and the Caraballos RDC have suggested forming a management team to decide on the fate of these facilities.

The team will be composed of Agriculture Secretary Domingo Panganiban, Agrarian Secretary Virgilio de Los Reyes, NCIP Chair Jesse Dumagat, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno and local officials.

The dairy farm and the facilities in Apalyan and Mountain Province serve as livestock breeding centers and dairy marketing centers.

The farm, which supplies fresh milk to city residents, was at the center of a jurisdictional dispute among the DA, DAR and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in the 1990s when a DAR adjudicator ordered Iloilo claimants to take over parts of the property under the agrarian reform law.

After extensive litigation, the DAR withdrew the petition. But the NCIP began processing the claims of the Iloilo heirs of Datuig Pinis. Datilo and old Iloilo partnerin Mauro Carlito and Mateo Cesarios over the dairy farm in 2001.

Backed by NCIP injunctions against the DA, the Iloilo claimants were allowed to build structures, cultivate land and orchards—activities that exposed the greenest portion of the property to urban encroachment.

Mayor Brandin Tenorio said he wanted a clean policy on the dairy farm because he had been "demolishing squatter houses there at the behest of DA."

"If we really intend to give it to them anyway, we might as well do it in an orderly fashion," he said.

Tuesday defended the Iloilo claims, saying the law allowed them the right to realize old ancestral properties. He said the NCIP released 44 certificates of ancestral land titles (CALTs) last year, approved 14 more CALTs this year, as well as the certificate of ancestral domain rights for Bukid and Bandanay people in Barangay Poppy Hollow inside the Arbo Kiat reservation. Florante Cabrera, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

ROUNDUP

ARMM plebiscites

COTABATO CITY — Sen Commissioner and Inclusion will hold plebiscites in Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur on Monday during the passage of two regional legislative measures creating two towns in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Sen. Zaldy Ampatuan, who recently signed into law two acts of Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act creating Datu Blah Sinsuat town in Maguindanao and Shariff Aguak town in Sulu Town said the people in the affected areas would decide what the jurisdiction will be held. Charlie Estrupo, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Cement from China

PAMPANGA, Maguindanao — The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao has imported 125,000 bags of cement from China to augment its infrastructure program needs, Minda Mamitua, regional budget secretary said. Mamitua said the importation has brought down the local retail price of cement from P180 per 40-kilo bag to P135. ARMM Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan said the shipment origin point can use the same payment import tariff rates that the region was offering to direct importers under its economic zones law. Alwin Mendoza, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Massacre suspect tagged

BUTUAN CITY — Police have identified a suspect in the killing of three family members in La Paz in Agusan del Sur last week. Chief Supt. Ginery Barcos, Caraga police chief, said that the suspect, Gabriel Bacani, had yet to be arrested. On July 16, a man wielding a machete barged into the house of the Bravo family while they were having dinner in Panagangan Village, killing Clarita Bravo, who was four months pregnant, and her children Princess, 3, and Chamberlain, 1. The woman's husband, Carlito, narrowly survived and told police that he and Bacani had a land dispute. Frankie Calipus, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Pneumonia top killer

COTABATO CITY — Pneumonia is the leading cause of death among patients in the government-run Cotabato Regional and Medical Center (CRMC) here during the first six months of this year. Dr. Nilo Magno, CRMC chief, said the hospital killed 80 of the 624 admissions from January to June. Dengue ran second of the cases were already in an advanced stage. Another common ailment, dysentery, caused 6 to 12 patients, she said. Charlie Estrupo, PDI Mindanao Bureau

3 killed in road accidents

BALILIHAN — Two persons were killed while 23 others were hurt in separate vehicular accidents in Bangued on Friday. Reports from the Office of Civil Defense in the Cordillera said a collision took place in Barangay Amburayan, Bangued, Abra, killing Elmer Pobilan, 23, and injuring 20 other passengers. People's car Buddy Tandem caused the driver to lose control of the vehicle. In Tubungan, Lagangilang, Abra, a motorcycle collided with a 10-wheeler truck driven by Ramonito Ambrosio, resulting in the death of Ambrosio and injuries to Ambrosio's wife, Rita, and Ramonito Ambrosio Jr. Both vehicles were traveling in the same direction when the accident occurred. Nestor Etolle, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

City police chief axed

CALAPAN CITY — The police provincial director has relieved the city police chief after controversial videos showed a police establishment in Barangay Malayan on Friday and kicked off with four firearms. Senior Supt. Jude Sacdoa, acting Batangas police director, said he relieved Supt. Antonio Tayban when the town became aware of the alleged by a team led New Peoples Army videos. Sacdoa said Tayban had failed to institute measures to prevent the submission. "Reports said not only were police personnel not manning the checkpoint when the incident occurred but also the checkpoint was not manned," the police official said. Wilmor Magsaysay, PDI Reg. 1. Bureau

Injured dolphins rescued

CEBU CITY — Six injured Bornean melon-head whales rescued by four young adult fishermen in separate p.m. on Thursday along the shores of Silay Lapaan, Cebu, Regis, 23 men south of Negros. Each-head, 10-440, dolphin was rescued off the Silay Lapaan coast after overnight and released back to the sea at past 7 a.m. The head day the two fishermen in the adjoining town of Binalbagan found another injured dolphin, measuring 2 feet in length, stranded at Pulo Beach in Barangay Tangbay. Jhonnel Magallanes, PDI Visayas Bureau

'Great PR speech but where will money ...

From page A1

said. "Our new tax laws are only raise about P80 billion a year."

Mr Arroyo's allies panned her speech. House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles's comment was representative.

"The road map geographic speech has provided us with the correct economic direction in detail. As a congressman from Mindanao, we are specially focused on the super region for agri-industry and local leaders of the re-public. Let the people feel the economy recovering and not-their-ative political bickering. The message is clear and it's time to move forward and leave the past be-hind."

Business leaders expressed guarded optimism.

A pro-administration business-man hailed the President's political acumen for laying down the long life of infrastructure pro-jects.

"What was launched about five speech[-vaccine] is showed] that she's either a master politi-cian or a good economist," said Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry chair emeri-tus Sergio Ortiz-Luis.

She'll get votes at local level

Ortiz-Luis said the Presidents would earn votes on the solid support of sectors at the local level and encouragement of heads of local governmental units...after her project-laden the speech less than a year be-fore the mid-term election.

"How can her candidate lose at the local level, especially if their projects come through?" said the Ay-Ala, who also heads the Philippine Exporters Confedera-tion Inc. "There will many jobs for everyone there."

Overall, he said he was pleased with Ms Arroyo's speech, calling it "one of the best Ismas I've heard."

"What people are saying is that there is no tri-ckle-down-ef-fect [as present]," he said, re-ferring to the opposition's criti-cism of the Arroyo administra-tion's economic theory[?]" and that if she manages to implement only one-half of what she promised here, it would be fen-tastic."

Ortiz-Luis also hailed the fact that Ms Arroyo's address was "very specific and measurable."

Wait and see

The influential Makati Busi-ness Club (MBC) said it preferred to see whether the President would be able to do it.

"It's a long list of measures so we'll watch and wait. If these promises to become a reality," said Guillermo Luz, executive director of the umbrella organization of the country's largest business groups.

In general, Luz welcomed the President's plans although he questioned the administra-tion's proposal to create "super regions" from the country's 14 existing administrative re-gions.

"I have trouble accepting the concept of the super region," he said. "I don't understand the re-thinnin for it."

Legitimacy

Luz, who along with the MBC was active in the anti-Ar-royo campaign last year, ac-knowledged that some had misgivings about the Presi-dent's legitimacy but were now con-vinced as politics and more re-centered to "moving on."

"Some people are saying, 'Let's move on.' Some are saying we can't move on until some is-sues are resolved. A third group is saying it's OK to move on if you resolve the remaining is-sues," he said, referring to pro-scuding doubts about the legit-imacy of Ms Arroyo's presidency. "I identify with the third group."

Luz said it would be difficult to move forward with an ag-gressive economic plan while surrounding issues of legitima-cy remained.

The foreign business com-munity was similarly im-pressed but urged that the gov-ernment act on Mr Arroyo's plans immediately.

"It would be fantastic if she could implement it, but they have to act immediately, be-cause it just takes so long here," said Robert Swan, executive di-rector of the American Cham-ber of Commerce of the Philip-pines Inc.

Some said foreign business-men would be willing to risk their money freely if they saw that the government was serious about "getting its act together."

If she walks the talk ...

"If the foreign businessmen see this, if they see that she walks the talk, they'll step up in the plate," Swan said.

Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Teodoro Casiño criticized Ms Ar-royo for praising Maj. Gen. Jovi-to Palparan, the Army regional commander accused of human rights abuses and political killings.

"It was revealing that she con-demned the killings right after praising her most notorious gun-man. I think that reveals the dou-ble talk that she is fond of using. It shows that this was a fake con-demnation. It lacked sincer-ity and even sensitivity for the vic-tims," Casiño said.

In Baguio City, Pastrix Ar-neiro, agribusiness chief in the Cordillera, said developing northern Luzon as an agribusi-ness gateway could be aided by developing idle lands for agri-forestry and intensifying the pro-duction of high-value crops like Arabica coffee, stone fruits and vegetables like peanuts and cab-bages.

These products have been listed as priorities of the Region-al Development Council," he said.

Geography lesson

In Pampanga, Archbishop Os-car Cruz said Ms Arroyo's speech was a "good geography lesson."

"It was also a great public rela-tions speech and good for a 'Wish ko Lang' (TV show) episode," he said.

In Pampanga, Rayomundo Bandan, a driver, said the focus on the regions replacing Impe-rial Manila was "good" because "it would bring a good life to the people in the provinces."

With reports from Reuters, Ma-ria Isabel Ang-Bernardo, Michael Lim Ubac and TJ Burgonio in Manila; Marlon Ramos, Ephraim Aguilar, Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Madonna Virola and Aseni Ja-cander Jr., PDI Southern Lu-zon Bureau; Delmar Garbin, Melvin Gascon, Villamore Visaya Jr. and Yolanda Sevilla-Pontric, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau; and Tonette Orejas and Cesar Pilla, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Villar now leads 'chop suey' ...

From page A1

Sen. Joker Arroyo, who considers himself an independent senator, described the setup as "chop suey."

Traditionally, senators who would be a losing candidate for the Senate presidency be-came the opposition, and those who support of the winning candidate the majority.

No challenge

No one challenged Villar yesterday for the top Senate post. The unusual arrangement came about because of the gentlemen's agreement that Franklin Drilon and Villar forged in 2004.

Under the deal, Drilon would serve as Sen-ate president for two years from July 2004 to July 2006 after which Villar would serve for two years.

In his acceptance speech, the 57-year-old former Speaker said hearing magistrate defend the Senate as "independent but not adversari-al" to Malacañang. His message to Mala-cañang was: "Making personnelle, realistic long-checking personal, it's not a policy."

The rank-of-file and anti-Arroyo senators in the majority that elected Villar by acclama-tion brought confusion to the legislature rule-ordered if such a majority could be considered administration or opposition.

Osmeña re-elected

Members of the minority who give their as-sent to Villar's nomination were Minority leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Senators Luis "Lol" Ejercito and his son Jinggoy Estrada, Panfilo "Ping" Lacson, Alfredo Lim and Sotero Mallegal.

Sen. Sergio Osmeña III was a no-show at the opening ceremonies.

Lacson took to the floor to ask for the decla-ration of those with the majority and those with the minority.

He quipped that the aide separating the majority votes are on the left side of the ses-sion hall) and the minority should be re-moved for lack of distinction between those who are for and against the administration.

Before yesterday's election, the 23-member Senate had 16 majority and eight minority senators.

Senate Majority Leader Nanette Pangilinan moved to table the answer to Lacson's question.

Mature majority

Pangilinan, who had withdrawn support from President Macapagal-Arroyo, said the new Senate composition should be simply called independent.

For administration Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said the chamber was now dominat-ed by a "mature majority."

"I think the Senate majority is an aber-ration at birth. If it were a cat, it would be a hybrid. If it were a horse, it would be a piebald. Besides new cease in politics. What we are seeing is the art of the political deal," Santiago said.

Santiago said Villar would be held hostage by his opposition backers.

While they had thrown their support be-hind Villar, Ejercito and Jinggoy Estrada maintained they were not breaking away from the opposition.

"I signed the resolution in support of the president's agenda," Ejercito said, referring to the six-point agreement between Drilon and Villar.

"But it doesn't mean that I'm abandoning the opposition and my quest for truth and jus-tice against the illegitimate government of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo."

Senator Ejercito said: "I will go on, Senator Jinggoy will move align-ourselves with the ad-ministration. He will remain with the opposi-tion until Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is ousted."

Drilon and son said they had "complete trust and confidence" that Villar would keep his vow to maintain the chamber's indepen-dence from Malacañang.

But the younger Estrada warned: "Once this representation has note that the indepen-dence from Malacañang is being compro-mised, then I will not hesitate to immediately withdraw my support for Senator Villar."

Forgives

By taking his side and vow to support Vil-lar's bid for the Senate presidency, former President Estrada has forgiven Villar for his key role in his impeachment in 2000.

"Yes, he has forgiven Manny Villar," Sena-tor Ejercito said in an interview at the packed session hall after the opening ceremonies.

BETWEEN GENTLEMEN: Sen. Manuel Villar takes his oath as Senate President before Sen. Franklin Drilon. Beside Villar is his wife Cynthia and daughter AFP PHOTO

"He (Estrada) has a big heart; there's no room rancor in his heart."

As Speaker, Villar played a key role in the quick transmittal to the Senate of the articles of impeachment against then President Estra-da in 2000.

Ejercito said she was surprised when the for-mer President told her and Jinggoy they should support Villar, who had often visited the elder Estrada at his rest house in Tanay, Rizal, in the days prior to the opening of Congress.

While the impeachment proceedings were aborted, the elder Estrada, who faces corruption and other charges, was eventually ousted in Jan-uary 2001 by a military-backed people's revolt, detained and then charged with plunder.

Undefined alliances

Pimentel said the voting by acclamation was done for expedience.

"The voting was precisely by acclamation so there would be no need to define al-liances," Pimentel said. He said he expected the fireworks and line to stay with the minori-ty.

Villar said reporters he did not consider the Senate majority as being aligned with the ad-ministration.

"I don't think this can be called administra-tion because it may turn out that there are more opposition in the Senate. So this is the Senate majority. We're prepared to be an in-dependent body. We don't care about the President," Villar said.

Gentleman's pact

Before the Senate adjourned its session on June 11, Drilon vowed to honor his gentle-man's agreement in 2004 with Villar to yield the Senate leadership at the opening of the regular session of Congress yesterday.

Just to be sure, Villar passed around a note-bloc to Sen. Ed Ilid, and got 14 signatures although resolution was not presented to the members in the media.

At the start of yesterday's session, Drilon announced that he was "relinquishing the post of Senate President." Pangilinan moved that Drilon's resignation be "noted upon ac-cordingly," then asked for the election of a successor.

Drilon then descended the Senate rostrum, which had guarded for more than five years and went down to the floor to nominate Villar, cit-ing him for his "competence, efficiency, dili-gence and strong determination to succeed."

"With his indomitable and indefatigable

Are You Missing Out On These Pleasure Factors During Sex?

Are you secretly suffering from lack of energy, hard performance during your intimate moments with your partner? Or do you have to make a drug to help you perform well, but secretly suffer afterwards from headache and fear it might ruin the health of your partner? Then you are missing out on the basic sex pleasure: hard and sustained erection, prolonged orgasm, quicker recovery after orgasm, and last but not least – a satisfied partner. And speaking of sex-lust, the woman's organ quantity-wise (and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's downfall).

Brother and son said they had "complete trust and confidence" that Villar would keep his vow to maintain the chamber's indepen-dence from Malacañang.

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"The voting was precisely by acclamation so there would be no need to define al-liances," Pimentel said. He said he expected the fireworks and line to stay with the minori-ty.

Villar said reporters he did not consider the Senate majority as being aligned with the ad-ministration.

"I don't think this can be called administra-tion because it may turn out that there are more opposition in the Senate. So this is the Senate majority. We're prepared to be an in-dependent body. We don't care about the President," Villar said.

Gentleman's pact

Before the Senate adjourned its session on June 11, Drilon vowed to honor his gentle-man's agreement in 2004 with Villar to yield the Senate leadership at the opening of the regular session of Congress yesterday.

Just to be sure, Villar passed around a note-bloc to Sen. Ed Ilid, and got 14 signatures although resolution was not presented to the members in the media.

At the start of yesterday's session, Drilon announced that he was "relinquishing the post of Senate President." Pangilinan moved that Drilon's resignation be "noted upon ac-cordingly," then asked for the election of a successor.

Drilon then descended the Senate rostrum, which had guarded for more than five years and went down to the floor to nominate Villar, cit-ing him for his "competence, efficiency, dili-gence and strong determination to succeed."

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NEWS

Puerto Rican is Miss Universe

Miss Philippines is chosen most photogenic

MISS PUERTO RICO Zuleyka Rivera enters the stage during the swimsuit competition of the Miss Universe pageant in Los Angeles on Sunday. AP

LOS ANGELES—AN 18-YEAR-OLD ASPIRING ACTRESS from Puerto Rico who hopes to someday star in US and Latin American films has been crowned Miss Universe 2006.

Zuleyka Rivera Mendoza shared a nervous emotional hug with the first runner-up, Russia's Oksana of Japan, moments before the winner was announced, then clasped her hands to her mouth in amazement as her name was called twenty-eight.

Rivera beamed as the crown was placed on her head but briefly fainted after a post-pageant press conference. She quickly recovered after being given liquids, according to Miss Universe spokesperson Esther Swan.

Rivera, who was wearing a dress made entirely of metal chains, had been standing under hot stage lights for some time when the began to topple over. Someone caught her as she fell.

"I always had faith and confidence in myself, but I never knew I was going to win," Rivera, speaking in Spanish from the stage, said in her first remarks as Miss Universe.

The winner, who is from Isidro on the Caribbean island's southern coast, said she would continue the pageant's advocacy of promoting awareness and education about AIDS and HIV.

"I want to tell those people there are always problems in life, but there are always possibilities to improve things," she said.

Miss Sinching in the top five were second runner-up Lauriane Gilliéron of Switzerland, third runner-up Jennifer Arnodo of Hungary and fourth runner-up Tara Conner of the United States.

BP contestant

Liz Andrea Ramos of Philippines was chosen most photogenic in an online vote by the public. Angela Ponce of Ghana won the congeniality award in a vote by all 80 contestants. Ordonez, who carried the impressive looking Lamaze stencil, won the second for best national costume.

"They were probably afraid not to pick Miss Japan or she would use that sword," quipped Carmen Kowalcy of TV's "Queer Eye," who provided commentary along with 2004 Miss USA Shandi Finnessey, Opera singer Nelson Ortiguia and Latin singer Chris pureral, of musical performances.

In her pageant biography Rivera explained what made her different from the other contestants.

"Physically, I have been told by modeling agencies and friends that I represent the voluptuousness Latina look," she said. "Beyond that is my love expression our heritage, our smile and the wonderful attitude of voice that we are."

In her spare time, Rivera said she liked watching the Latino version of "American Idol" and dreamed of the future one day to act in US and Latin American movies.

Rivera is the 15th winner from the US territory in the pageant's 55-year history, the competition. Dustin Quiñones was the title in 2001. AP

'Jueteng' movie bags 4 awards in Indian filmfest

By Marinel R. Cruz
Entertainment

JEEPNEY JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM, a digital film that chronicles three days in the life of a "jueteng" collector, bagged four of the five major awards in the director's Orissi Digital Festival of Asian Cinema held last week in New Delhi, India.

"Jeepney," or "The Bet Collector," won Best Film, Best Director for Jerusa, an and Best Actress for Gina Pareño.

The movie also won its second Jury, received Federation of Film Critics (Fipresci) jury prize. Its first win from the Moscow International Film Festival earlier this month.

"We almost were handed out the Best Actor because the jury did not think any one deserved it," Jerusa said in a text message he sent to the Inquirer on Sunday night, right after the awards day.

Jerusa added: "Indonesian actress Jajang Nur Gayo [said] told me at the dinner after party that Pare Dena [who played Gina's husband] was considered for Best Actor, but that the jury had deemed his role too short. Had he won, we would've swept all the main awards."

As Best Actress winner, Pareño was cited "for her fully involved and empathetic portrayal."

Fipresci executive Ravi Vasudevan, awarding the "resplendent black sari—flattered The audience by delivering her acceptance speech in Hindi.

In 2004, another Filipino, Raffiewin Luna, won Best Actress in the same festival, for Maybe O' Mars's "Babae sa Breakwater."

"Jeepney" was singled out for "its remarkable understanding and credible portrayal of life in a Manila slum and the totality of its accomplishment in terms of excellent camerawork and the tone or tone realized by the director."

On July 13, Jerusa and Pareño had arrived in New Delhi. "Jeepney" was screened for a capacity-crowd the following day.

Joji Alonso, MGB Films executive producer, who has stayed behind in Manila, told the Inquirer: "They told me that our jury members (an Indonesian actress) had approached Gina to congratulate her for her performance. The jury member understood Filipino because her father, a diplomat, had been stationed in the Philippines for nine years. She said Jeffrey she was amazed at how real the whole movie had felt."

There were 12 feature films in competition—from Japan, Taiwan, Iran, Malaysia, India, Singapore, Turkey, Philippines, Iraq, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Saudi Arabia.

Other Filipino films shown in the Asian Perspective section (exhibition) were Dey del Mundo's "Pepot Artista," Jules Tarrit "Bahi Todo Tenso," Mes Medoy's "Lo Vida Loco" and Auraus Solito's "Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros."

Thieves cripple Mayon hotline

TABACO CITY (PHOTO) — Time to steal about 30 meters of copper valued around Php4,000 Mayon volcano, crippling the communications of volcanologists who monitor it for the first time in eight years.

"The copper wire may be worth a few hundred pesos, but it may spell the difference between life and death for residents near Mayon," said Renato Coquia from the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology.

Other officials said the theft, discovered early Monday, prevented timely information and updates to Manila headquarters.

The 2,474-meter Mayon volcano came to life on July 14, spilling lava and rubble. Residents in a "mild and quiet" eruption. Thousands, mostly old Monday the Lava Base has now reached about four kilometers from the crater, triggering personal relocations.

"The probability for an explosive eruption to occur is still low," they said in a statement.

The government has declared a no-go area for a six-kilometer radius around the crater, but several thousand still farmland and livestock in the area and could access farmed out until then is a mandatory evacuation order.

Mayon is one of the Philippines' 22 active volcanoes. AP

Aplus METRO
Editor Evan S. Dipasupil
E-mail: a_pod@inquirer.com.ph

BAYWALK may have been empty of pronouncedly yesterday but it was blanketed in a dried-out school in the big waves. Employees of the Manila City Hall promptly swung into action and cleaned up the strip.

Bay trash ends up on tourist walk

By Marghee C. Ordz

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF MANILA yesterday recovered a huge pile of garbage—enough to fill up four trucks—that was swept ashore by big waves in Manila Bay.

Rafael Rosa-Gomez, head of the city's Department of Public Services (DPS), said the driving winds and big waves brought on by typhoon "Glenda" stirred up the garbage and debris floating on the water and dumped them on the beach.

"Most of the trash consisted of plastic bags, shredded tires and bamboo poles," Rosa-Gomez said. "We do not usually witness this much garbage in our everyday operations."

The city government official said they were able to recover eight truckloads of trash from Manila Bay last week.

Mayor Lito Atienza had earlier instructed local government officials to post notices on establishments with dirty premises as part of the city's cleanliness clearinghouse campaign.

Atienza conducted a surprise inspection in San Andres last Thursday early morning. Manila South Cemetery director Jesse Valencia, barangay officials and local residents from the Barangay 668 in Manila.

The mayor said all business permits issued by City Hall specified the duties and responsibilities of establishment owners to keep their premises clean. Failure to comply was sufficient ground for the revocation of a business permit.

The entire DPS crew said the city's litter reduction was mobilized to ensure the strict implementation of Manila's intensified cleanliness campaign.

Residents, meanwhile, said no families were displaced from their homes because of the typhoon. Only Manila Street experienced flooding which reportedly receded at around 7 a.m. yesterday, he added.

Fire hits fast-food chain's stock room

₱10M lost as blaze eats up Pasig warehouse under driving rain

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

AN ENGINE EARLY POSTED THE warehouse early yesterday, but broke out inside the two-story structure of a fast-food chain in Pasig City, destroying more than P10 million worth of property.

Firefighters took almost nine hours to put out the fire, fanned by the pile of disposable utensils and cooking oil, Bureau said.

Witnesses quickly ruined all electrical connections the moment they saw the blaze.

But the elements caused more problems for the more than a dozen employees working inside the warehouse, a big part of which stored as a bonus by food stocks, Marketer said.

The fire grew rapidly, razing the second floor which was made of wood.

Firefighters managed to douse the fire under control four hours later.

But they continued hosing down areas too hot for metal warehouse, whose ceiling had also collapsed, for the next five hours to make sure the blaze had completely died out.

Nobody was seriously injured, although the Web said a firefighter sustained a minor cut on his hand during the operation.

Investigators are still determining what triggered the fire.

Firefighters have been warning residents not to be deceived into thinking that fires are not likely to break out during heavy rains.

Leaking ceilings could soak electricity lines and trigger fires, SFO1 Reel Galyah of the Marikina City Fire Station had said earlier.

Five days ago, a fire razed at least a dozen houses in Barangay Mahaba, Malabon City.

"Home owners are advised to check their electricity lines this rainy season. They should switch off if some connections are spliced and if these are already soaked in water, especially if they have leaking roof problems," Galyah said.

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METRO BRIEFS

Grisly catch

THE BODIES of two women — Filipina and a non-Filipina — were found floating on the Pagsanjan River in Laguna City by a fisherman Sunday. The upper half of their bodies were stuffed into a sack. Both were naked from the waist down. The bodies were found by fisherman Cresilito Linatoc yesterday morning at around 11:20 a.m. Sunday, said Supt. Alfred Corpuz, Laguna police chief. Case investigators PO3 Elmer Tagaig police chief. Case investigators PO3 Elmer Tagaig police chief. Case investigators PO3 Elmer Garcia said the two women are also residents of Cavite. Police Protects, Lieutenant Colonel Rodolfo Diaz on Tuesday morning, he had received a text message from an anonymous sender telling him that his sister and a friend were kidnapped by four men.

Jocelyn R. Uy

2 robbers killed

Two ALLEGED SUSPECTED robbers were shot dead by a policeman inside a grocery before dawn yesterday in Taguig City. In his report, city police chief Supt. Alfredo Corpuz identified one of the suspects as Wenceslao Maala Jr. The other had yet to be identified as of press time. Initial investigation revealed that PO1 Dongcarlos Bautista, a member of the Regional Special Action Unit, was among the passers-by when they heard the robbers tried to hold up on the East Service Road, PNR Site in Barangay Western Bicutan at around 3:30 a.m. yesterday. Bautista, who was on his way to work at Camp Bagong Diwa, said he was about to get off the jeepney when two of the six suspected robbers, seated at the rear of the vehicle, blocked his path and declared a hold-up. The policeman told the two that he was a police officer, but the suspected ran to the left side with a kitchen knife.

Jocelyn R. Uy

UE diamond jubilee forum

UE'S ALFREDO E. Lim leads distinguished University of the East alumni who will take part in the second of the Jubilee Orientation to be held on July 28 at the UE Theater. Entitled "A Day with the Dreamers: Inducing a Colloquium on National Security (Where are We Heading?)," it will feature UE alumni Col. Rolando Bautista (Ret.), Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Commissioner Ernesto A. Zamplay. For inquiries, please call 7359471 to 82 or UE Manila, 5074321 to 30 (directly) or visit www.ue.edu.ph.

Survival kit for urban dweller 'a must'

By Tarra N. Quismundo

IT COULD BE A CHAIN SMALLER THAN a bandolier or a sturdy purse, that mailing needs for a survival kit in your bag could spell the difference between life and death.

During a time when emergencies could occur without warning, carrying a small lifesaving kit should become the habit of every urban dweller, if you ask the head of a nongovernment organization (NGO) who wants to turn each Filipino into a lifesaver.

"It would come in a size that you could carry around. It's better that you have it and not need it than need it and not have it," said Lester Domingo, vice president and operations director of Emergency Response Center (ERC) Inc.

Domingo said the kit must contain items that are "multipurpose and multi-environment," as it should be usable to any location where an emergency might occur—inside a jeepney, in a street canon, up a skyscraper or deep in the jungle. "Even the container should have a purpose. So it could be a container that would remain intact even if exposed to rain or if caught in something sharp. It could even be a lady's bikap (vanity) kit transformed into a survival kit," he said.

What should the kit contain?

Besides a separate bottle of water, it should have energy food like a pack of crackers or some candies. Domingo recommends something newer or sugar coated to make it hunger pangs and keep the mind alert.

Another must: A small container of 10 percent povidone iodine solution—your typical topical medication for injuries that are mild to dangerous. Domingo said the solution has proved effective in making sleep well aware of unwanted ants to drink.

"The rule is you put four drops of the solution in one liter of water, then you allow it to set for 30 minutes. When you still doubt the quality of water, you could increase the staying time," he explained.

The survival kit should also have a small cutting tool and a portable light source like a pocket-size flashlight which may either be battery-operated or self-powered.

"You should have a light and a knife. You can only cut so much by bending, biting or pulling and you don't glow, so you need a light source," Domingo said.

A pocket radio with an AM function would help in a source of information in case of emergency. And don't forget the spare batteries. Domingo said battery-operated equipment in the kit should require batteries of the same size when you need a change. So, if your flashlight has a double A battery, so should your pocket radio.

Lastly, some sewing tools like needles and thread also deserve space in the survival kit. There just has to be a way for you to put that loose button back in place before an important meeting.

"So, you can still go to the mall, you can enjoy the places you still want to go to even if at the back of your mind, you still have the fear that there's going to be an earthquake. So what? You have your survivalist," Domingo said.

DID YOU KNOW

Did you know?

THE CITY OF Valenzuela was named after Dr. Pio Valenzuela, a member of the Katipunan who went to Dapitan, Zamboanga del Norte in 1896 to consult Dr. Jose Rizal about the group's plans against the Spanish colonizers. Valenzuela was born in 1869 to an affluent family in Polo, Bulacan. The town became the municipality of Valenzuela in 1903—seven years after Dr. Valenzuela's death—by virtue of Executive Order 60 signed by then President Theodore Marcelo. It officially became part of Metro Manila in 1975 and was declared a city in 1998.

Carl I. Amadeo III/ PDI Intern

Shelter aid proposed for Pasig calamity victims

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE PASIG CITY COUNCIL HAS PROposed the automatic allocation of 5 percent assistance to families affected by calamities like fire, earthquake and floods.

In a proposed resolution scheduled for second reading this week, councilors recommended a "shelter allowance" of P5,000 for affected house owners and P2,000 for those who live in rented houses.

Apart from the shelter allowance, calamity victims will also receive a week's worth of food supplies, including cooking utensils.

"It is the primary concern of the city government to extend help and support to its constituents who are victims of calamities," the councilors said.

To implement the resolution should it be approved, funds would be taken from the city calamity fund, the proposal added.

The city council had earlier approved an ordinance setting aside 20 percent of the city government's calamity fund for disaster preparedness.

This would allow the city government to set in place disaster preparedness measures and buy equipment to lessen the impact of disasters, councilors said.

Budget officer Remedios Perez told the Inquirer the city had allocated P440 million of its 2006 budget as calamity fund.

The city has a P3.6-billion budget for 2006.

Local governments are mandated to set aside five percent of their estimated revenues for calamities.

The funds are to be used only during and in the aftermath of a calamity.

What's wrong with outdoor advertising?

ON TARGET

Ramon Zafe

DID OF THE POWERS OF A court to cling for campaign accusations or persons for disobeying its order or decision.

Being sued for contempt means being made to pay a fine, at the very least, or jailed indefinitely, in extreme cases.

But it seems the judiciary is not using its power of contempt against the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) in its decision preventing the MMDA from destroying advertising billboards and signs on railway posts in Edsa.

Is it because the MMDA is a government instrumentality?

But what's the difference between a government agency and a private agency?

Isn't the law applied equally for both government entities and individuals?

On Oct. 27, 2005, the Supreme Court affirmed the permanent injunction issued by the Pasig Regional Trial Court against the MMDA on the issue of demolishing billboards and signs on railway posts on Edsa.

The MMDA had earlier filed an appeal with the Court of Appeals on the same issue. The appellate court affirmed the Pasig RTC's permanent injunction.

So the MMDA went all the way to the Supreme Court and it also upheld the Pasig RTC.

The MMDA should have stopped tearing down the advertising billboards and signs on the railway posts on Edsa; it did not.

Instead, the agency, flagrantly violating a Supreme Court injunction, continues to destroy the billboards and sign post up by Trackworks.

Trackworks is under contract with the government-owned Metro Rail Transit Corp. (MRTC) to put up advertising billboards and signs on MRT posts along Edsa. The contract was signed on Oct. 27, 1998.

In 2002, the MMDA began tearing down advertising billboards and signs on MRT posts. That was when Trackworks filed an action in the Pasig RTC.

* * *

Question: Why is the MMDA insisting on only not the advertising billboards and signs on MRT posts when there are other billboards and signs along Edsa?

Why not also tear down the other advertising structures if the reason is their they are ugly to behold?

What's wrong with the advertising billboards and signs on MRT posts when the MMDA doesn't find anything wrong with those billboards that are as tall along Edsa that advertise goods from somewhere to earth?

* * *

A traffic safety institution in the United States has given outdoor advertising a clean bill of health.

The presence of billboards in US highways are no more distracting to motorists than staying cellular phones and screaming children in cars.

That's what the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute found out upon the request of the Foundation for Outdoor Advertising Research and Education.

"The presence of a billboard does not cause a measurable change in driver behavior in terms of speed behavior, speed maintenance or lane keeping," said Suzanne E. Lee, the study's principal investigator at the Blacksburg, Virginia university.

Virginia Tech recruited 26 motorists who drove specially outfitted cars on a 20-mile stretch in Charleston, South Carolina.

The route included highways and secondary routes, a typical mix of urban and suburban landscapes. There were 33 billboards of varying sizes on one or both sides of the road.

"The bottom line is there was no difference," said Charles Lamart, chair of the Foundation for Outdoor Advertising Research and Education.

Hunger-striking Saddam hospitalized, tube-fed

BAGHDAD, IRAQ—SADDAM Hussein was hospitalized Sunday and fed with a tube as the 69-year-old dictator of a hunger strike to ensure he was healthy enough to continue on trial for crimes against humanity, the chief prosecutor said. The procedure came as the ex-leader's troubled trial entered a new phase that could lead to his hanging.

Prosecutor Jaafar al-Mousawi said he learned that Saddam's health had become "unstable because of (the) hunger strike" during a visit to the U.S.-run prison where the former ruler and his seven former co-defendants are held.

"We took him to hospital and he is being currently fed by a tube," al-Mousawi told The Associated Press without elaborating.

Al-Mousawi said the feeding tube had stabilized Saddam's health and the former president would appear in court as scheduled this week. Saddam was not present for his appearance Monday when the trial resumes after a two-week break because other defendants are urging their final statements.

Saddam and seven co-defendants have been on trial since Oct. 19 in the deaths of Shiite Muslims after a crackdown on the town of Dujail, which was launched after an assassination attempt there in 1982. They could receive the death penalty by hanging, if convicted.

But Saddam's lawyer Khalil al-Dulaimi said some of the defendants not their lawyers would appear Monday unless the court "meets the minimum requirements" ensuring a fair trial for the defendants.

Al-Dulaimi told The Associated Press that Saddam was "in high spirits and his health very good" despite the hunger strike.

SADDAM REUTERS

US officials had acknowledged that Saddam and three other defendants had been refusing food since the evening meal of July 7 but were drinking coffee and sweet teas. The detainees insisted that the 69-year-old Saddam was still in good health despite two weeks without food, and had his hand beats admired by "medical professionals" of the dangers of not eating.

A spokesperson for the US detention command would not say whether Saddam had been hospitalized but said he was under medical supervision and was "maintaining" taking nutrients through a feeding tube.

"He's continuing to refuse meals," Lt. Col. Bob Kevin Curry said. "He remains in excellent care and custody, and we're providing appropriate medical care."

US officials have not identified the others who were refusing food, but defense lawyers said they are co-defendants Barzan Ibrahim, Saddam's half brother, former Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan and lawyer Awad al-Bandar.

The hunger strike was intended to demand better security for the defense team. Three of them have been assassinated since the trial began, most recently Khamis al-Obeidi who was abducted and slain June 21.

The defense team blamed the killing on Shiite militiamen and announced it would boycott the trial in protest over the lack of security.

In a letter to the court, the defense said it wanted US authorities to provide security for the lawyers and their families. It also demanded a 45-day recess in order to prepare closing statements and that court proxies to allow down as much time as they wanted to present final arguments.

Chief Judge Rauf Abdel-Rahman suspended the proceedings July 11 and warned that if the defense did not appear Monday, he would appoint other attorneys to make the final presentations.

Al-Bandar and Ramadan were in media-filled arguments Monday, followed by Saddam and Barzan. The four other lawyers have already presented their summations. Wednesday sometime, the trial will be suspended while the five judge panel deliberates a verdict.

The verdict is expected by mid-August. Saddam is also due to stand trial Aug. 21 for a crackdown against the Barzan in the 1980s during which an estimated 100,000 Kurds were killed. AP

WORLDBRIEFS

American Bar says Bush flouting Constitution

WASHINGTON— The American Bar Association said Sunday that President Bush was flouting the Constitution and undermining the rule of law by claiming the power to disregard selected provisions of bills that he signed. In a report, a bipartisan 11-member panel of the bar association said Bush had used so-called "signing statements" far more than his predecessors – issuing constitutional objections to more than 800 provisions in more than 100 laws on the ground that they infringed on his prerogatives. In the 2004 panel report, members concluded that Bush had asserted the power to override sections of laws that he considered unconstitutional. He can veto it, the panel said, but "signing statements should not be a substitute for a presidential veto." WTT

Pakistan in large-scale nuke expansion, says Post

WASHINGTON— Pakistan is building a reactor that could produce enough plutonium for 40 to 50 nuclear weapons in what would be a major expansion of its nuclear program, The Washington Post reported on Monday. Satellite photos show what appears to be the construction site for a large nuclear reactor believed to Pakistan's only plutonium production reactor, according to an analysis by nuclear experts at the Washington-based Institute for Science, the newspaper said. The analysts concluded that the diameter of the reactor's containment suggests a very large reactor "operating in excess of 1,000 megawatts thermal," the Post said. "Such a reactor could produce more than 200 kilograms of weapons-grade plutonium per year, assuming it operates at full power a modest 250 days per year," the newspaper said, quoting the technical assessment. "If 4 to 5 kilograms of plutonium per weapon, this could translate into production of over 40 to 50 nuclear weapons a year." Pakistan has nearly a decade of producing about 150 kilograms of plutonium a year, enough for about two warheads, the Post said. Reuters

Kosovo to seek independence in talks

VIENNA— Kosovo's chief to open bilateral independence talks in Vienna on Monday, a step Serbia says would threaten the stability of the Balkans. The talks will be chaired by Martti Ahtisaari, the Finnish former United Nations envoy to Kosovo, who has been appointed by the UN Security Council to lead the negotiations. Ahtisaari's proposal – independence in all but name – will be the agenda of a UN-led mediation process that began in February. The presidents and prime ministers of both sides will talk face-to-face for the first time since the Western-dominated body took over Serb territory after a NATO air campaign ended the Serbian crackdown on Kosovo Albanians. The Kosovo Albanians, who make up 90 percent of the province's population, want full independence and have threatened violence if they do not get it. Serbia, which has ruled Kosovo since the Ottoman Empire, says it will never accept the province's secession. Reuters

Japan deploys fish in war on terror

TOKYO— Forget about Japanese kamikaze fighter pilots crashing into the sea on mission or a tiny fish, which will be deployed to detect contamination of water supplies. Light orange rockfish, which are extra-hour combinations between a fruit tasted rosy and environmentally hard as jello in taste, will start authorities if their movement is irregular. Shizuoka prefecture south of Tokyo devised the fish alert system after the government asked the country to come up with antiterrorism measures following the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the United States. If the water is contaminated, the fish show irregular behavior, such as swimming with their noses near the surface because of breathing problems, or simply die. "The new water contamination monitoring system will be able about water filters up to 15 hours to detect contamination, whereas with fishes that traditionally take thirteen hours," said Mitsuyoshi Hori, an official handling the project. AP

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The WORLD

SMOKE billows following an Israeli air strike in the southern suburbs of Beirut, a stronghold of Hezbollah, July 23. AFP

Israel pushes deeper into Lebanon

LEBANESE photographer Lind Majdi, 22, was killed Sunday when an Israeli airstrike hit near her car in southern Lebanon. AFP

ON THE ISRAEL-LEBANON BORDER—HEAVY fighting erupted Monday as Israeli ground forces pushed further into Lebanon, entering another Hezbollah stronghold, and at least nine Israeli soldiers were wounded, the military said. The guerrillas also fired more rockets at northern Israel.

Israeli troops took control of a hilltop in the Lebanese town of Bint Jbeil after a heavy artillery barrage, but had not taken the town itself, military officials said.

The **Israeli military** said it had no casualties to report in the clashes, and Israeli medics also reported the only fatalities on the Lebanese side of the border, and large plumes of gray smoke rose over the area.

Several Israeli tanks and armored bulldozers were seen moving toward the battle, but two tanks also rammed the rocky hills at high speed, crossing back into Israel to carry wounded soldiers out. The wounded were taken to civilian ambulances, which sped off to wood hospitals with sirens blaring.

The military said it captured two Hezbollah guerrillas, and Israeli media said attacks by Israel's air force had caused some Hezbollah casualties.

Bint Jbeil, a major town, is about 2 kilometers north of the hilltop village of Maroun al-Ras, another Hezbollah center. Over the weekend, Israeli ground troops fought for control of Maroun al-Ras, which is less than 500 yards from the border.

The army said it was expanding its ground operation in Lebanon, which had been limited during the two-week offensive to pinpoint operations near the border—a policy that military analysts said may well be insufficient to achieve Israel's goal of pushing Hezbollah back and destroying its ability to attack Israel.

"The troops continues to press in western Lebanon," Brig. Gen. Alon Friedman told Israel Army Radio. "We are advancing."

Friedman said the operation would continue for up to 10 days "in order to achieve the basic goals we set down," indicating trying to stop Hezbollah rocket fire.

The Israeli military said that during the past 24 hours its planes had hit more than 170 target across Lebanon, including 25 missile launchers, more than 30 Hezbollah buildings and Hezbollah communication lines.

The army said it captured two Hezbollah guerrillas, the first it had taken any into custody during the fighting. "When the enemy surrenders, we take them prisoner. The two prisoners are located in Israel and will be held here with the aim of investigating them," said Friedman.

Two more workers were freed in Iraq on Monday, heading to the southern town of Hayat Thamem, rescue officials said. No casualties or damage were reported.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was traveling to the Middle East on Monday to discuss the crisis with officials. She was to meet Monday night with Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and on Tuesday with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

On Sunday 19 rockets were fired into Israel, killing two people in the city of Haifa, the military said.

Israel launched its operations in Lebanon after Hezbollah guerrillas killed three soldiers and captured two others in a cross-border raid on July 12.

Before Israel's capture of two of its fighters, Hezbollah leaders had demanded that Israel release Palestinian and Hezbollah prisoners in win freedom for the two captured Israeli soldiers. Israel has ruled out talks, demanding the unconditional return of its soldiers, but it has negotiated such exchanges in the past. AP

Bush still bucks ceasefire despite Saudi king's plea

WASHINGTON—WHITE HOUSE officials said President George W. Bush remains opposed to an immediate ceasefire to stop violence in the Middle East, despite personal pleas from ally Saudi Arabia's king to help stop the bloodshed.

Saudi King Abdullah has mocked Bush to intervene in Israel's military campaign against Hezbollah in Lebanon, where the death toll is approaching 400 after less than two weeks of bombing. Abdullah's request was hand-delivered to Bush by Saudi officials who requested a meeting Sunday at the White House.

"We requested a cessation to all... low for a cessation of hostilities," Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal told reporters as he departed the White House.

"Those brought a letter from the Saudi king to stop the bleeding in Lebanon, and there has been an agreement to save Lebanese lives, Lebanese properties and what the Lebanese have built, and to save this country from the ordeal it is facing," Saud said.

Israel's comments reflected Bush's past statements that all parties must take immediate steps to stop the violence to stop. But Bush has refused to press for an immediate ceasefire.

"Our position on an immediate ceasefire is well known and has not changed," said White House national security spokesperson Frederick Jones.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice also participated in the Oval Office meeting before departing for Israel in the first US diplomatic effort on the ground since Israel began bombing Lebanon on July 12. The fighting has killed hundreds in Lebanon and dozens in Israel.

On the way to a refueling stop in Ireland, Rice indicated an openness to working with Syria to resolve the crisis. In recent weeks, the Bush administration has blamed Syria, along with Iran, for stoking the recent violence by encouraging Hezbollah to attack northern Israel. AP

VOODOO RITUAL
Haitians carry the parts of a cow in a mud pool during a Voodoo festival in the village of Plaine du Nord in Cap Haitien, Haiti, July 23. Hundreds of Voodoo believers are in Plaine Du Nord to celebrate the annual festival. REUTERS

Minister calls for more Aussie babies

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA—Australian Treasurer Peter Costello on Monday renewed his call for women to have more babies, calling it vital to the country's long-term health.

The ethnic composition of Australia's population will change if the fertility rate continues to stay below replacement levels of 2.1 children per woman, Costello said while launching a federal government census.

"There are some European countries with low birth rates and high immigration which have moved into this situation, and it has caused a lot of social division," he told reporters, without naming the countries.

Increasing the birth rate would cost taxpayers more in health and education spending and would create a short-term shortage of women in the work force, he said.

"But in the long run, it is essential to hold our population and, probably, increase it so that we have the economic base to give Australians a growing standard of living as well as providing support for the aged in the future," said Costello, a father of three.

Australia's birth rate has increased in the past year to 1.8 children per woman from 1.73, following a steady decline from 3.55 in the early 1960s.

Australia was one of the few developed countries to record an increase in its fertility rate last year, the latest issue of Science magazine reported. Other nations, particularly Japan and Russia, are facing huge population declines in coming decades, it said. AP

THE HORSEMAN COMETH
A Tibetan displays his horsemanship during the festival of "Damu," or shooting arrows on horse, in Jiangcie in China's Tibetan Autonomous Region, July 23. The over 100-year-old "Damu" festival opened on Thursday and will last for a week. AP

Issues after obesity surgery common

WASHINGTON—FOUR IN EVERY 50 patients who undergo weight-loss surgery develop complications within six months, the federal government said Sunday.

The number of such surgical procedures has been rising rapidly, along with the incidence of obesity, which now affects 200 percent of adults in the United States, health officials said.

Obesity surgery is helping thousands of Americans lose weight and reduce the risk of diabetes and other life-threatening diseases, said Dr. Carolyn M. Clancy, director of the agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, a unit of the Public Health Service. But she added, "This study shows how important it is for patients to consider the potential complications."

Many of the complications arose so serious that patients were readmitted to hospitals or visited emergency rooms within six months.

In the meantime, issues as bariatric surgery, doctors reduce the number of calories that a person can consume and absorb. One of the more common techniques restricts the size of the stomach and the length of the intestine, where nutrients are absorbed.

Federal researchers found that complications from obesity surgery significantly increased costs. AFP

'Anne Frank 2006' chronicles war

By Ben Zuber Jr.

AS THE WORLD'S EYES TIPS toward another vibrant and relentless calamity—this time between Israel and militants in Lebanon—a question that almost immediately arises is just what Anne Frank might have made of "our kids, 2006."

That's where Galyat Eander, a 15-year-old from Haifa, Israel, uploaded a glossy, first-person video clip last week, made as she ran through her home, naked down whitewashed staircases and blasted her way from room to room toward the family's bomb shelter (tinyurl.com/2ulyo).

Hezbollah, the Lebanon-based militant group, has set off a barrage of and artillery assault from Israel on July 12 by crossing the border and kidnapping two Israeli soldiers, was raining missiles of its own on Galyat's seaside city, where she was enjoying summer break between her freshmen and sophomore years of high school.

A civil air raid siren can be heard in the background.

Galyat has since fled Haifa to stay with her brother in Tel Aviv. "Since my camera was right next to me, I made a short clip of my running down to the shelter. Once I saw the clip, I decided to post it online so people could get a glimpse of what we go through when under attack."

From the ravaged parts of Lebanon, meanwhile, several young scribes have been documenting Israel's counterattack pounding. From their points of view in English-language blogs.

"Six blasts in the past 10 minutes this building took," wrote Alissa, a thirty blogging from Beirut at rockstarsdiscotheque.com, on Ju-

ly 13. "The sound of the jets is so faint I don't think they're very close."

An hour later, she wrote, "I don't want to become a refugee."

Just 80 miles to south, as Hezbollah missiles rained down on Haifa, Yossi Katzen, along with his 12-year-old brother, Eyal, huddled in an inner corridor of their home. Katzen picked up his digital camera, shot some clips and posted them online at EyeHate.com.

He said he posted videos online because he wanted friends and family to see what was going on—"to show them my reality," he said. AFP

SPORTS
Editor Teddyvic S. Melendrez

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Tiger's royal encore

Emotional Woods earns 11th 'major' at British Open

THIS ONE'S FOR DAD: The British Open trophy finally in the bag, Tiger Woods cries as he walks off the 18th green of the Royal Liverpool Golf Course in Hoylake, England. He is comforted by caddie Steve Williams. AP

HOYLAKE, ENGLAND—THE EMOTIONS HAD BEEN TRAPPED in Tiger Woods since he stood at his father's grave two months ago, set loose only after he tapped in his final putt Sunday to win the British Open.

It was his 11th major championship, but the first one they couldn't share.

He plunked the ball out of the cup, turned slightly and started to go when a mixture of sadness and satisfaction washed over his face and he screamed out, "Yes!"

Woods hunched his head to the shoulder of caddie Steve Williams, sobbing vigorously, his chest heaving. There he found his wife, Elin, and hugged her for the longest minute, tears still streaming down his face.

"It's kind of the one who's gotten things up a little bit and viewers cry," he said. "But at that moment, it just came pouring out. And of all the things that crop before but recent to me and the game of golf, I just wish he would have seen it one more time."

It was would have looked familiar.

Woods was turbulent as ever on the [illegible] fairway, [illegible] Hoylake, [illegible] Liverpool, talking career on [illegible] three fronts.

He hit driver only one time the entire week...the 16th hole of the first round—and to [illegible] first play that was so impeccable his caddie kept a sheet of paper of all the shots Woods missed.

There were only three of them.

"I don't think anyone has ever hit long irons that well," Williams said.

It carried Woods to a 5-under 67 and a two-shot victory over Chris DiMarco, making him the first player since Tom Watson in 1982-83 to win golf's oldest championship in consecutive years.

It was his first victory since his father, Earl, died May 5 after a brutal [illegible] with cancer. Some questioned whether Woods would regain his focus after taking nine weeks off, especially after he returned to the US Open and missed the cut for the first time in a major.

Woods earned his 11th title in 59 career major starts at a professional.

Tomorrow, Woods had an answer for everyone. And even when DiMarco made a charge with another gritty rally in a major to close with a 68, Woods responded with three straight birdies that allowed him to settle confidently up the 18th fairway at Hoylake and toward the finish line.

No one could stop Woods from winning his 11th career major at age 30. He is tied with Walter Hagen for second on the career list and is one step closer to the 18 professional majors won by Jack Nicklaus.

He had to work for this one because of bizarre, equally emotional and inspired while coping with a sweet mixed bag.

DiMarco's mother, Norma, died of a heart attack July 4 in Colorado. DiMarco, who pushed Woods into a playoff in the Masters last year, did all he could to deliver.

He made a 25-foot birdie on the par-5 11th to pull within one shot of Woods, then made a 30-foot par save on the 14th to stay in the game, a save that rattled the cup and made everyone wonder if he had help from above.

THERE'S A LO

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GAMES TUESDAY
(Mall of Asia Stadium)
7 p.m.—Welcoat vs Red Bull
9 p.m.—Alaska vs Air21

More bite than growl for Tigers

By Jessica W. Pays

Win column

Espinola captures squash crown

LOCAL SQUASH'S RISING STAR, Ricky Espinola, whipped veteran Arnel Bagamina, 9-0, 9-0, 9-1, recently to bag the Division "C" crown in the fourth leg of the Milo 2006 Interschool at the Makati Sports Club courts in Makati City. Espinola toppled Robert Sicat, 9-0, 9-0, 9-0, and Bagamina surprised Edgar Baldivia, 9-6, 9-0, 9-2, in the semifinals. Garcia finished third by downing Baldivia, 9-1, 9-1, 9-0. The crown-clinching Ateneo student then took down Jerry Maldelagan, 9-1, 9-2, 9-1, in the semifinals. Marquez finished third spot at the expense of Maldelagan, 9-0, 9-5, 9-0. The crowning of the champions and prizes will soon capstone Milo and organizer Squash Rackets Association of the Philippines.

Don Bosco Makati nips Marist in OT

DON BOSCO TECHNOSCHOOL, Makati, Makati dusted Technoschool, 9-8, in overtime to clinch solo second spot in the Philippine Amateur Swimming Association (PASA) Batang Pinoy Interschool Swimming Championships at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex pool. Don Bosco, which finished with 9 points behind champion Technoschool, 10-0, after Technoschool, 10-0, after Technoschool, 10-0, after

Macasieb sets new Ironman nat'l mark

FILIPINO-AMERICAN TRIATHLETE ANJARD Macasieb set a new Philippine record in the 6th Pearl Ironman World Championships in Lake Placid, New York, last Sunday.

The 30-year old Macasieb clocked 10 hours 37 minutes and 18 seconds, nearly 19 minutes faster than the old 10:55 RP mark that Alvin Abdon set six years ago in the grueling 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike and 26.2-mile run event.

Based in Clifton, New Jersey, Macasieb was one of the four triathletes from Asia at 1570s.

Victor Zyemtsev of Ukraine shaved 6:39:19 to emerge champion in the race that also served as 19's competition for bragging rights to stand the world.

Trina Bruno of Canada placed second in 6:59:12 while Rodger Beke of Belgium was third in 8:46:44.

Macasieb ranked fifth in the swim leg at 56:05 minutes. But the standout philosophical had a tougher time in the next two courses, finishing 136th in the bike event (5:40:23) and 154th in the run leg (3:49:14).

A triathlon hopeful for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Macasieb is training for the Ironman Asian Games, Macasieb is training for the Ironman Asian Games, Macasieb is training for the Ironman Asian Games

SPORTS

Astounding turnaround paves way to triumph

PARIS — THE CRAZIEST TOUR DE FRANCE IN MEMory ended Sunday the same way the last seven had: with an American wearing the yellow jersey, this time with a Lance Armstrong rival in Lance.

After steaming from all subplots and assorted cracks of conventions, Floyd Landis' athletic big-bold spread he held on for the ceremonial ride over the cobblestones of the Champs-Elysees.

Tinged fighting, never stopped bothering, "Landis said after leaving the winner's podium with his daughter, Ryan.

But plenty of race fans surely had their doubts, especially after his wild ride in the 16th last week.

Landis had tried to apply Armstrong's meticulous strategy for winning, but then went awry when he flat out crashed on the final climb of Stage 16 on Pyrenees, dropping up to four lost fulfilling 8 minutes. It seconds behind Spain's Oscar Pereiro.

All but written off, he managed a stunning rebound the very next day to the last mountain stage, pedaling like a mad man and closing the gap to 30 seconds.

So astounding was the turnaround that race director Jean-Marie Leblanc, who has overseen this event 18 times, declared: "the best performance in the modern history of the Tour."

The comeback was read by many as a master stroke, to stanch continuing Landis to cycling's pantheon alongside greats like five-time Tour champions Eddy Merckx of Belgium for his show of both human frailty and superhuman courage in the space of 24 hours.

The 30-second gut Landis, who leads four-minute Oscar sylvestre's Dutch rotating in position to win by outpacing Pereiro on the final time trial Saturday.

And by the time he was done, the race was reborn. Injected with the drama and breathtaking flavor of years past. AP

FLOYD Landis clenches his fist during the honor lap. AFP

Landis victory restores Tour glory

PARIS—FLOYD LANDIS' THRILLING TOUR DE FRANCE VICTORY DID much to dispel the air of gloom hanging over cycling's showpiece event after it began engulfed by another doping controversy.

"One only favorite is named champion," said outgoing Tour director Jean-Marie Leblanc, dreaming of a wide-open race after the retirement of Lance Armstrong who held the Tour in his grip for seven years.

His wish was granted as the race remained unpredictable until the 19th of the 20 stages was over 3,662 kms in scorching heat, over a few drops of rain in Bordeaux.

The yellow jersey changed shoulders a record 14 times and had seven leaders. American Landis claimed it three times and lost it three times before securing it definitely in the penultimate stage.

The 30-year-old son of a Minnesota family from Lancaster county in Pennsylvania also produced one of the greatest comebacks in the race's history when he lost two minutes on stage from Saint-Jean de Maurienne to Morzine.

"Floyd went like an eagle on the first climb and against that you can't do anything," said Spanish rival Carlos Sastre, in tears after being beaten.

Leblanc's successor Christian Prudhomme added: "Landis's performances not only left its mark on the 2006 Tour, it also left its mark on the whole history of the race." Landis Phonak team director John Lelangue was also instrumental in aiding the victory of the race.

"Schangue brought a lot of freshness to the race. He persuaded Landis it was possible to attack from the start of the stage and reconstructed turn-take cycling, old fashioned cycling, mythical cycling," Prudhomme said.

"Where the action is of such quality, it can only delight media, supporters, organizers," added Leblanc.

Before ending in euphoria, the race had to survive the biggest doping scandal since the Festina affair which rocked the 1998 Tour and brought cycling to its knees.

On the eve of the prologue, pre-race favorites Ivan Basso of Italy and German Jan Ullrich were forced to pull out and were suspended after being named in a doping investigation in Spain.

Ullrich, winner of 1997 Tour, and Basso, who was eyeing a Class Tour de France double, both denied any wrongdoing. Ullrich was later sacked by his T-Mobile sponsor while teammate Oscar Sevilla and manager Rudy Pevenage were suspended.

AGGIE rider Francisco Mancebo, fourth in last year's race, was another rider to be withdrawn by his team. A whole team, Astana-Wurth, led by Alexandre Vinokourov, had to quit.

The peloton was reduced from 21 to 20 teams and from 189 to 176 riders. The race started without the top five riders from 2005.

"It was not a calamitous start," Leblanc pleaded in his memorable pre-race conference on the eve of the last parade in the Champs-Elysees. Reuters

US president calls champ

WASHINGTON — PRESIDENT GEORGE W. Bush called the latest American winner of the Tour de France, Floyd Landis, on Sunday afternoon to congratulate him and invite him to the White House.

"Mate feel great," Bush said the cyclist, who rode with an injured hip. "Everybody's proud of you. You showed amazing strength and courage."

Landis plans to undergo surgery this fall on the arthritis right hip, injured in a 2002 crash, and said he hoped he would be able to compete in the race again next year.

Landis picked up where another American had left off last year, when Lance Armstrong completed his seventh Tour win. AP

Blake breaks Roddick's American reign

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA—JAMES Blake will move to a career-best world No. 3 ranking Monday after winning the duel for American tennis supremacy with a victory over Andy Roddick in the Final of the Indianapolis Open.

The affable Blake, who a year ago stood 109th in the rankings, rallied for a 6-0, 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) victory to beat his pokey-playing buddy Roddick for the second time this month.

After six straight losses to Roddick dating to 2002, Blake made a break through on grass in the Queen's club semi-finals in June, with Roddick subsequently falling to go past the third round at Wimbledon.

Despite his success in an Indianapolis final Sunday past over two losses, the humble Blake refused to concede he's the best of the US men.

"Andy played well, I just got lucky on some break points," said the player who added another 2006 title to the ones he earned in Sydney and Las Vegas.

"I've had my fair share and played some of my best tennis when I needed it. But I'm glad to see that the 'old' dusty is back," he said of his former world No. 1 Davis Cup teammate who has scratched back to 19th in the world by reaching the final.

"Andy's playing with confidence, playing unbelievably. I believe in him, he's the No. 1 seed in my book." But Blake can also revel in his own accomplishment as he builds up for the US Open in a month.

"This is one of the best finals I've ever played," Blake said. "I played my best tennis, it's very satisfying to have done it in the final.

"Andy and I wanted to prove that US tennis is back now," added Blake. "We're back on our surface now and we want to do well going into the US Open and hopefully I'll win a few more."

"I like the ways that things are going," Blake never gave up, despite being swamped in the first set, getting a break in the final game of the second set and seeing this break points in the third to eventually succumb to a tiebreaker.

Roddick was unable to make a winning impression despite 17 aces and 42 winners. Blake struck 15 aces while serving no-break points.

"Today I had to play my best tennis," said Blake, who now enjoys as the top-ranked American. "It's crazy what confidence will do. Everything seems to be going my way at the moment." AFP

JAMES Blake thrusts through on grass.

Baldomir looks for juicy pot

ATLANTIC CITY, NEW JERSEY — No one should have trouble remembering — or pronouncing — Carlos Baldomir's name in WBC title matches.

Certainly not after the Argentine journeyman's ninth-round knockout of Arturo Gatti on Saturday night in the first defense of Bal. Arthur's WBC welterweight title.

If the 35-year-old Baldomir was largely a mystery before his upset Gatti, he's no longer after years his down. Images of Gatti put him solidly on the map — and put him in line for the biggest payday of his long and mostly anonymous career.

"Besides my many negotiations with everybody," said Oscar Quiroga, president of Toronto Ring side Productions, which represents Baldomir.

That could reveal several possibilities, including fights with Ricky "Hitman" Hatton, the WBA welterweight champ, or WBC champ Antonio Margarito. Then there is the specter of undefeated Floyd Mayweather Jr., considered one of the world's best, but also his fights are ... though he doesn't currently own a belt in the welterweight division.

Baldomir made no secret after Saturday's fight that he has his eye on Mayweather. He also had a message for him.

"I believe hand work gets the job done. For my boxing, I will say every boxer is weak with class and speed time together with my aggressive reaction to schedule practice routine so that we will all be ready to achieve our ultimate goal of winning gold medals for the Philippines."

Acting PBC president Jaime C. Dychiaco was in attendance in Ring Arena.

"He's highly recommended," says Dychiaco of the boxer, who has been in the top five of the World Boxing Challenge five times and twice made the Oregon Bowler Association All-Star squad.

Brown will be supported by assistant coach Jimmie Tee and trainers Ray Reyes and Gene Tenebro in preparing the Filipinos for the Doha bout.

NEW AP bowling team coach Sammy Edward Brown (third from left, seated) visits his RP counterparts in Tee, acting PBC president Jaime C. Dychiaco, PNC management committee chair Bong Coo and Glenn Sonsona (seated from left) and national pool members.

US pro is new RP bowling coach

A 24-YEAR-OLD AMERICAN PRO BOWLER, SYDNEY Edward Brown, has been tapped by the Philippine Bowling Congress to coach the Philippine team in the Doha Asian Games this December.

Brown has a 23-year bowling experience, 11 as a competitor and the rest as coach. Twice pistol champion of the Oregon Bowling Association Championships and a member of the United States Bowling Congress, Brown boasts a 242 average, 40 consecutive 200 scores and 300 perfect games.

"When marching, my goal is to make bowling easy on the body, and simplify the movement for easier repetition," says Brown.

"I believe hard work gets the job done. For my

Rollins clinches BC Open plum with 64

ROLLINS

DESOTA, NEW York—Jobs Rollins birdied the final hole to complete a scorching 64 here Sunday and win the three-million BC Open.

One of four players in the top six who shared with a 64, Rollins needed a playoff with Bob May and earned a two-year PGA Tour exemption with his first victory since the 2000 Canadian Open.

"It was fourteen wins, it's a relentless feel," said Rollins, who has been on the PGA Tour since 1997. "You know now that you have won multiple times, now it was like a routine thing.

In his previous PGA Tour win, Rollins defeated Justin Leonard and Brad Lancaster in a playoff.

He arrived at the 208-yard 18th hole knowing he needed a birdie to avoid a playoff with May, who had just finished the hole himself.

Rollins nearly crushed the green in two and two-putted from the binge, handing in a five-footer for the win.

A reserving of players took advantage of the Valencia Gabriel Hortawski, the 1997 champion who began the day with a one-shot lead over three players.

Hortawski couldn't match the low scores produced by many and finished four-over 74.

Rollins began the day three strokes astride but played his guy-two golf at the Tarnbig Course Brauer's Annapolis Course. AFP

Rodriguez Yankees' fall guy

NEW YORK—SI IS MILLIONS A $25-million man and arguably the game's greatest player, yet Alex Rodriguez is the target of frustration and boos from fans who are looking for every failure of Yankee Stadium. The shortstop Rodriguez, the highest paid player ever with his 10-year, $252-million contract, is the fall guy for the travails of the second place Yankees, a victim of great expectations from without and within. "The fans have every right to express whatever they're going to express," he said last night. "I'm their homerun man at Yankee and after a recent game. Reuters

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Ernesto G. Yolardo

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Lavish party to announce ABC 5 is a serious player

JOEY DE LEON

ABBY Villasenor ("Sana TV")

By Marinel R. Cruz
Photos by Jun Dolino Pomadan

ABC 5 SPENT MORE THAN A million pesos for the lavish "Idol Staging Idol" party that it hosted last Wednesday, according to Roberto "Bobby" Barrois, managing director for News and Entertainment.

The event, held at the Manila Diamond Hotel, was part of the network's bid to compete with the two current leaders in the ratings game, GMA 7 and ABS-CBN.

"Our corporate affiliate, production and events groups teamed up to make this event a success," Barrois told Inquirer Entertainment on Saturday.

Highlight of the evening was the launch of the local version of the phenomenally popular talent search, "American Idol."

"We have other programs lined up, but I don't think there's another show in the world that's bigger than 'Idol,'" said Barrois. "The intention is for 'Philippine Idol' to be its own thing and not just ABC5 squarely in competition."

"Philippine Idol" airs its pilot episode on July 28 at 8 p.m. The program will be aired twice a week—Saturday and Sunday—where it gets to the performance and results phases.

Other shows premiered to the entertainment media during the party were "Urka Sisas," "Shall We Dance?," "Solo Mia," "Totoo TV," "ICSI: Scenes of Survival," "Ultimate Guinness World Records" and "Ripley's Believe it or Not."

Barrois was especially keen on the network's newest telenovela, "Letty la una Sea," Mexican version of the Colombian hit series, "Betty la Fea."

"Shrey" because so successful even in Mexico, the mecca of telenovelas, that the Mexicans decided to make their own version," he explained.

ALI Sarte and Maverick Reines

'Philippine Idol' puts us squarely in competition'

(DOWNSIZE) Dichoso, Regine Ramolete, Edna Ledesma and Arnold Ignacio, hosts and judges of "Shall We Dance?"

RYAN Cayabyab, Francis Magalona and Arnell Ignacio

Barrois said a US-based production outfit also bought the rights to air "Letty," and Hollywood actress Salma Hayek is said to be behind it. "This is something new, especially since Filipino viewers are so used to watching soap series in Korean and Taiwanese," he said.

The program at the Diamond Ballroom began with a song-and-dance number by double-Gemena, Regine Tolentino and Edna Ledesma. Judges of the reality dance contest "Shall We Dance?"

Hosts of other ABC 5 shows who helped pick out the raffle winners were: Joey de Leon ("Eto na Mona"), Ali Sarte ("Shi"), Maverick Reines and Abby Villasenor ("Sana TV"), Lucy Torres-Gomez and Dominic Ochoa ("Shall We Dance?"), and Benjie Paras ("Urkaseo").

'Press Idol'

Eladyh Contreras ("Hulo Mga") and other hip radiomatic jockeys Incaddio hosted the event.

Fourteen entertainment writers joined "Press Idol," a singing contest patterned after "Philippine Idol."

Judges Ryan Cayabyab, Francis Magalona and Arnell Ignacio (replacing Pilita Corrales, who is on a US tour) declared female Lorenzo winners. Coronets won P30,000 and a trip for two to Cebu.

Marichel Rubio-Bautista won the grand raffle prize—an appliances showcase.

Other prizes were microwave ovens, DVD players and Nero Magic Ring (hoodies) makes phones. All guests were treated to a sumptuous buffet and goodie bags.

How 'debt' is your love?

GUESS WHO THIS SEXY ACTRESS IS? SHE has a credit line with (critics) more. She used to be a good customer until she went overboard. Her Estafeta has reached P3 million! Has she lost her balance because of too much love?

The P3M worth of gift checks she signed were all given to the mean of her actor-boyfriend. The staff of the store has traced the unused numbers of the GCs that the actor's ma signed, charged to the retired account. How "debt" is her love?

Clue: The actress is voluptuous (and so is the mean of her credit).

Ohhh gee, Ogie!

ETC Arthur's a delight to be around Ogie Alcasid. His stomach is genuine. Things are never "chuvalin ized" between us. Our friendship has a mark of its own. He what's supposed to be an interview ends up being a heartwarming chat between friends.

Ogie is all agog preparing for his birthday tonight, "Stand-Up Comedy," on Aug. 5 at the Mos Theater (call 431-0999 for tickets). The concert will showcase his versatility both as a hit maker and comedian. His guests include Michael V, Metakil Jimon, Yeng Constantino, Bella Mae Quinto and Lani Pac.

"For me, it's harder to make people laugh with my stories than to sweet them with my songs. It's my birthday gift to myself to try to do both for my fans during the concert."

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

Dream cruise

OGIE'S inviting 30 Hi laughs and says, "Give more year to explore before I hit the big four-oh! It has always been my dream to make my own friends for a cruise on my birthday. We'll just sail off wherever the mind takes us!"

He has aided the turbulent waters of intrigue for so long. Guile he has become immune to them already. "For instance, this never-ending talk about Regine Velasquez and me having an affair has reached insane proportions. It no longer bothers me so much as it amuses me. Besides, my wife Michelle and I understand each other beyond anybody's understanding."

Dubay & Du Wife

HEEH' Fernandez and Lorna Tolentino give those his marriages a good name. The flawless couple have coped with all the flaws that have flowed their way for 23 years now. "I wouldn't say na nahigusan na namin kaluat ng isiak. Hanggang bukas kaging may good and bad times as a couple. What's important is we never give up on each other," LT says.

For the very first time, they are together in an afternoon drama series "Now and Forever" (Imanuel, "Lindang"), which premiers today on GMA 7's Dramarama sa Hapon.

The soapisher depicts the eternal struggle of humans between truth and lies. In the series, Lorna has a May-December affair with Pete Rovulos. It would not surprise "Chito's Debut girl" if your romantic scenes with Pete? She laughed. "We're too old for that!" But chemistry and their love remain forever young.

FYI. (For Your Indulgence)

•OMG! TOE Jeff Tan's debut film "White Lady" grossed about P5.8 million on the opening day. The Regal Films' horror flick was rated B by the Cinema Evaluation Board. Ironically, it lends a fresh look to a gory theme. No doubt, there's one lady perched on white clouds who's so proud of Dark Jeff's achievement—Ate Ian Sison Bello Tan.

•Lavender is exuded me about my recent item on Cindy Jacinto and her 60 Daniel Thompson. She claims that she loves live together in Rockwith Hindi. Sweet. I see nothing wrong with "playing house." That usually means playboys and playgirls even if it just lasts until further notice.

•With stunning daughter Lori and Ogie

HOW DEBT: A2-4

Inspired staging enhance appeal of 'Pi

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

IT'S OFFICIAL: THE FILM WORLD'S new box-office champion is "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest." What has made it such a big winner, and how good is it as a film?

In our estimation, the film's popularity is due to that fact that viewers enjoy pirate tales, they love Johnny Depp's wackily idiosyncratic portrayal of "Captain" Jack Sparrow, and the movie has production values and visual effects galore.

Working in its favor is the story have pushed the film all the way to the top in terms of likability and popularity.

But, what about the movie's quality? It's compromised by its unwieldy plot/story line, which can't maintain momentum as it's stretched out to the production's inordinate length.

In addition, Gore Verbinski further distends his production by stuffing in too many plot points that are fine when taken separately but feel overwrought when seen as one, big, unguided lump.

Despite these and other flaws, however, this "Pirates" sequel remains a rousing treat. It has episodes, sure, soupy, risqué, tension, drama, and to-spiced singing concepts that are hilariously executed. Some of the best bits:

The very creative characterization of Davy Jones as a denizen of the underwater underworld with a mollusk-encrusted squid for a face.

The long fight and chase sequence in which the combatants roll down a hill balancing and teetering on a huge wooden wheel, before finally coming to a stop in the briny deep.

The smash on the pirates' ship by a giant octopus, whose numerous tentacles are strong enough to pull the ship underwater.

And, most inventive of all, the darkly complicated series of scenes in which

oncepts

rates' sequel

...escape from rages wrong ...ent, while Ignacio also tries ...ay from pursuing ...ustees, to "impeded" like a pig on a ...ole.

...ticular sequence is devel... ...tensively that it steals up look... ...e of those classic silent-com... ...ic movies starring the aero... ...batic likes of Charlie Chap... ...lin and Harold Lloyd.

So sure up... ...pairs of "Tenel Ma'el's Choir" can be a te... ...dious view, but the film as a ...ounding and entertaining ...ensemble piece is, how can the ...ers" like top-billing?

...ne bday

...st month ends, ABC-5 is m... ...o "prime time blitz" of eye... ...ew shows, led by SNSpoipe ...ith Bonoc, July 30, 8:30 ...h Bonoc" 10:30 p.m. Sun... ...ensely fielding a new set of ...ol celebrity hosters—Carmi ...dewalk Shalaine, Asia Agcaoili ...ape. So glad to see that the ...owing clear of non-dancers, ...erstand ...C" is an in-depth (sexy) mag... ...ban Ed Lingao's taking viewers ...hour of breaking news on...

...ndocrant independently- ...ubert Blanc by directors like ...ravers, Jun Robles Robles, ...ane Mirasol and Jill Rivera. ...Ultimate Guinness World ...Ultimate Pinoy," "Indo... ...ino TV, "Letty Lo Mai Fen," ...ta," "Stories of Survival," ...ackers!" and "Edsa Heroes."

...jazz'

...ersian sounders from wonder... ...y Marquez and Renato Sa... ...They gained in ballet Philip... ...'Thai Jazz' dance tribute to ...on mag. 11-13 at the CCP ...on. Call 551-3005 or log on ...ilo.com.ph

Dear Fe play

...ORDIALAGG. Awaaa gan... ...ssss 'Ang Alaskasyang ita... ...ersyon ng kuang kwentong ...Joseph dela Cruz's Filipino ...anslation of Nobel Prize ...winner Dario Fo's acclaimed ...play on July 26-29 and Aug. ...3. Call 426-6001, local ...3221 or 0906-302-6484.

FEEDBACK

Shush, girl!

...from "Cris" (mirsch...@yahoo.com):

...RIA Aquino should stop ...giving unsolicited marital ...advice to couples in her ...nightly TV game show. ...Most of her advice con... ...ples have been married far ...longer than Aquino has ever ...been, and should perhaps ...do the same giving her ad... ...vice.

...In at least one recent ...episode that I saw, Aquino ...declared the necessity of ...how the woman should re... ...consider that final decision ...should not as the case, that ...wives should respect and ...follow their husbands' fi... ...nancial decisions.

...Aquino said this to a cou... ...ple who had to decide ...whether or not to accept ...her, but certain, money is ...exchange for a possible ...windfall. Firstly, it is only ...against those and Aquino ...should stick to what she ...does best and is paid for by ...her station—hosting.

...She should not make this ...game-of-chance a basis for ...favoring opinions and for ...preaching.

...Secondly, Aquino seems ...not to have heard of others ...towards joint- or shared par... ...enthood, where spouses are ...encouraged to jointly per... ...form the responsibilities of ...creating and taking care of ...their family, where each ...spouse is an equal footing ...with the other in every ...thing—sex, including deci... ...sion-making.

...This is to empower wom... ...en and liberate them from ...the traditional image of a ...'mere housewife.'

SM CINEMA

movietim SHOWTIX

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METRO MANILA

IMAX

SUPERMAN RETURNS

CINEMA 1

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 2

CINEMA 2

SUPERMAN RETURNS

SHOWTIX

EVENT CALENDAR

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Full Day Date: Cinema 2 - July 19 - 20, 2006

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2 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 2
3 SUPERMAN RETURNS
4 LADY IN THE WATER
5 WHITE LADY
6 NACHO LIBRE
7 LAKE HOUSE
8 WILD ORCHID 2
9 RV RUNAWAY VACATION
10 LOVE WRECKED

ERMITA

1 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 2
2 WILD ORCHID 2
3 LADY IN THE WATER
4 RV RUNAWAY VACATION
5 SUPERMAN RETURNS
6 NACHO LIBRE
7 WHITE LADY

METRO EAST

1 UNITED 93
2 LADY IN THE WATER
3 NACHO LIBRE
4 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 2
5 RV RUNAWAY VACATION
6 WILD ORCHID 2
7 SUPERMAN RETURNS
8 WHITE LADY

NOVALICHES

1 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 2
2 LADY IN THE WATER
3 WHITE LADY
4 NACHO LIBRE
5 RV RUNAWAY VACATION
6 WILD ORCHID 2

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1 I WANNA BE HAPPY
2 PIRATES OF CARIBBEAN 2
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE
1 LADY IN THE WATER
2 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 2
3 RV RUNAWAY VACATION
4 WILD ORCHID 2

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Wild Orchid 2

STA. ROSA

1 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 2
2 WHITE LADY
3 RV RUNAWAY VACATION
4 SUPERMAN RETURNS

LIPA

1 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 2
2 WHITE LADY
3 SUPERMAN RETURNS
4 RV RUNAWAY VACATION

DASMARINAS

1 WHITE LADY
2 NACHO LIBRE
3 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 2
4 RV RUNAWAY VACATION

ANGELES

1 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 2
2 LADY IN THE WATER
3 WHITE LADY
4 RV RUNAWAY VACATION

IMUS

1 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 2
2 RV RUNAWAY VACATION
3 LADY IN THE WATER
4 WHITE LADY
5 NACHO LIBRE

STARMILLS

1 3PL
2 LADY IN THE WATER
3 WHITE LADY
4 SUPERMAN RETURNS
5 RV RUNAWAY VACATION
6 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 2

BACOLOD

1 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 2
2 THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS 3
3 RV RUNAWAY VACATION
4 SUPERMAN RETURNS
5 WHITE LADY
6 THE MUN

ILOILO

1 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 2
2 WHITE LADY
3 RV RUNAWAY VACATION
4 LOVE WRECKED
5 SEE NO EVIL

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MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION
MOVIE GUIDE
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The best in her league

FROM HORSE WE SET to an as-detached observers, we dare proclaim Vina Morales as the best performer in her league.

She has a powerful, distinctive singing voice and style, and she can dance up a storm! (Don't get us started on her perfectly tight and toned body.) Throw her in with tone "Sarah mates"—she would be what ... in her very early 20s!—maybe in a huge upscale show and watch them shine.

Take it from us: we saw her in such a setting last year. The only fellow performers she did not render extraneous were Gary Valenciano, Martin Nievera, Lea Salonga and Sarah Geronimo.

Her last solo concert was "Vina Revealed" at the Folk Arts Theater in 2005.

But the has another one coming, "Vina ... Morales Revealed," Aug. 19 at the Araneta Coliseum, to celebrate her 20th anniversary in the business.

Live Aztec Productions promises "scintillating and thrilling numbers."

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RUNAWAY VACATION		PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 2	

MALL 5

1	RUNAWAY VACATION	3	LADY IN THE WATER	5	PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 2
4	WHITE LADY	5	NACHO LIBRE		

For ticket inquiries, please call Ticketflies at 911-5555 or log on to www.ticketnet.com.ph

ARANETA COLISEUM

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THE PUSSYCAT DOLLS LIVE IN MANILA! July 29, Friday - 8:00 pm

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jennifer aniston vince vaughn

the break-up

...pick a side.

R-13

OPENS TOMORROW

BLACK Eyed Peas

Vina confirms this, but won't give details. "Suffice it to say, it will be a night of surprises."

There are rumors that she will be going topless in at least one number.

Please. She doesn't need to do that.

Vina will be joined by special guests Gigo Alcuaz, Jun-E, her sister Shaina Magdayao and Aj Al de las Alas.

Call 920-2641, 721-2292 or 911-5555.

To Pea or not ...

TON tons of equipment (a million dollars worth of state-of-the-art sounds and lights) a full complement of musicians and dancers, and a lineup of RnB/hip-hop members for a two-hour show or longer.

That's what's in store for Filipino fans of the Black Eyed Peas who are expected to troop to the Big Dome on Thursday for the Manila leg of the group's "Monkey Business Tour." The premiere act (Vina Concerts) pledges it would be as if one had gone abroad to watch the Peas perform—without having to leave Manila.

The Black Eyed Peas are the Grammy-award winning group behind hits like "Where it the Love," "Let's Get it Started," "Shut up," "Don't Phunk with my Heart," "Don't Lie," "Behind," and "My Humps." They are out to sing all those hits, plus songs from the chart-topping "Monkey Business" album.

Tickets are from P500 (general admission) to P5,000 (premium).

VINA MORALES

The Peas—William Adams (will.i.am), Taboo (Jaime Gomez), Fergie (Stacy Ferguson) and DJ AM (Adam Alpaja Pascua Lindo, more popularly known as apl.de.ap—are flying in from Taiwan tomorrow with an entourage of about 40, which includes dancers and technical crew. Vina Concerts reportedly spent P30 million to import the group to Manila.

Outside of the concert, the Peas have scheduled extensive promo activities that will give them plenty of opportunities to touch base with their fans here.

Says Vina Concerts' Vhenzie del Rosario: "It's going to be a really, to-wall excitement the whole time they're in Manila."

Call 911-5555.

RUDY Fernandez and Lorna Tolentino

How 'debt'

Cravings are often spotted together in these tits and now show his events.

"We've just hanging out," says Lou. So for more things are hung by between them? Soon enough, will they be hung up on each other?

Jobs TV Season 2

SCREENLINGERIES

Productions brings you Jobs TV! (10 a.m., Saturdays on Studio 23), the pioneering program that addresses people's needs in the hiring and developing sectors. Go to its real source, the show gives a rundown on getting a job, from dressing an industry and making a résumé to acing interviews and even getting that promotion. Jobs host Rai Sequeira talks to the pagan would, with the segment Corporate Ladder, featuring IBM Globals used to managing offices providing information on their job openings and recruitment process.

By Special Request

CATCH "Erik Santos ... By Special Request!" at Dolores Tuesday on Friday at 9 p.m. Joining him are Pamalay Dy, Rhythm Band and Sid lady host Shalla Mae Quiroz. For tickets, call (0908) 430-1865, 379-8278.

Readers' Corner

SHAR Dolly,

I read your column on John Estrada last week. I was in Cagayan when John and their banquet to watch other there. My friends and I think that Brian was the one driving with John. She was wearing a sleeveless top and short miniskirt.

So my bf got it, she didn't act like she had a bf. We believe John became we came that he was keeping his distance while Brian was making her moves. We were overheard him telling Brian to go home as he gave her a glass of water because it seemed like she had had a few too many.

Name withheld upon request

For more page 4A

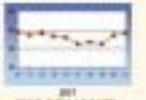
For feedback, e-mail ...

BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

Gov't beats tax forecast, reports higher take

Jan-May VAT collection of ₱29.7B exceeds target by 24%, says DOF



By Michelle V. Rocio

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT YESTERDAY REPORTED that it collected ₱29.7 billion in additional taxes from January to May, exceeding its revenue target for the period, on account of the VAT Reform Law.

The actual VAT collection in the first five months of the year was 24 percent higher than the ₱23.9-billion revenue target set for the period.

"The government is now harvesting the benefits of the implementation of RA 9337 [the VAT law], with the flow of additional revenue [to be] allocated for important projects," Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said in a statement.

Under the VAT law, 20 percent of the additional taxes to be collected this year would be used to help fund infrastructure projects and improve the delivery of basic services like education. The remaining 70 percent would be used to reduce the government's budget deficit.

The Department of Finance reported that of the ₱29.7 billion take, the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) collected ₱6.7 billion, while the Bureau of Customs (BOC) accounted for the larger share of ₱23 billion.

The BIR's ₱6.7-billion VAT collection was about twice its ₱4.5-billion target, while the BOC's VAT collection of ₱23 billion was 7 percent higher than its ₱21.6-billion goal.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said the BIR was able to beat its VAT collection target in the first five months because of the decline in claims of input value-added tax credits and higher-than-expected collection of additional customs duties from the imposition of non-VAT provisions of RA 9337.

But he also said the BIR's VAT collec-

GOV'T to B2

IN THIS ISSUE

■ **SMIC eyes P6-B** BPO complex /B2

■ **Customs seen hitting** ₱15.5-B collection target for July /B3

■ **Gov't moves to ensure** competition in power /B4

RP in line for huge dev't policy loan from World Bank

By Doris C. Dumlao

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1999, THE Philippines is in line for a large budgetary support facility from the World Bank known as the development policy loan (DPL), valued at over $1bn (or at least $400 million) from the office of development assistance.

The World Bank is expected to extend the support facility within the next 12 months.

"We haven't finalized the amount yet," WB country director Jaseem Ahmed said in an interview. "It's a lump sum and its tied to four specific reforms. So, we're saying this is a loan in support of the reforms government has taken by that time, including fiscal reforms, but it could likewise include others because we're not only looking at aggregate fiscal reform but quality of expenditures, civil service reform and corruption control."

He said the DPL would have quantitative and qualitative triggers, mainly related to the governmental fiscal matters.

"Because of the fiscal environment, this is the first time we're considering to issue" [illegible] said.

He cited a number of quantitative triggers for the DPL under the WB's country assistance strategy.

"One is an adjustment of 2.5 to 3 percent in the consolidated public sector deficit, that has already happened; significant adjustment in tax revenues, which is about to happen; and, if the government meets its targets for increasing revenue collection by 1.4 percent of GDP (gross domestic product) this year, the quantitative triggers would have been met," he explained.

On the other hand, the qualitative measure would include several reforms passed, such as the expanded value added tax (VAT) law, the administrative reforms in the Bureau of Internal Revenue, an improvement in the framework for public expenditures, and the reconciliation of budget ex-

full to

SM unit eyes P6-B BPO complex

Plan hinges on accelerated growth of the economy

By Elizabeth L. Sardido

SM INVESTMENTS CORP., THE FLAGSHIP firm of mall tycoon Henry Sy, is considering the establishment of a P6-billion business process and outsourcing complex at the Mall of Asia in view of growing demand for space from BPO companies.

Income source said SMIC was looking at putting up four BPO buildings to accommodate the complex but this would be pursued only if economic growth would accelerate.

SMIC is currently constructing a P1.5-billion BPO building at the Mall of Asia, dubbed OneEcomCenter, for completion by July next year. If plans pushed through, the six other buildings of the mall would be put up by the company.

A market study conducted by property consultant Leechiu & Associates showed that potential tenants had already started searching for possible sites for operations that were scheduled to start next year.

"BPO companies are looking for office space with certain specific advanced facilities to move their people. We will provide that type of space with a building that has open floor plates, advanced telecom facilities and 24/7 power supply," said SMIC executive chairman Sy Jr., who is also managing director of SMIC's property group.

The 300,000-square meter OneEcomCenter sits on a 1.27 hectare lot inside the SM Central Business Park at the Mall of Asia.

A total of 71,936 square meters will be available for lease. Seven floors will be allotted for office space, and the ground floor for commercial use. The average floor plate will measure 9,000 square meters.

Tenants of OneEcomCenter will also enjoy tax incentives as the BPO building has been registered with the Philippine Export Zone Authority (Peza).

OneEcomCenter is connected via its second level pedestrian bridgeway to the 386,000-square meter Mall of Asia, the country's largest shopping mall.

The Mall of Asia, the synecdoche of the SM Central Business Park, houses the first Philippine mall cinema of the world's largest megaplex maker, Dell Inc. Not too far away is another mall owner, Ortigas, which is housed in building F of the SM Corporate Offices.

With its huge floor plates, OneEcomCenter will be able to accommodate not just BPOs but also other types of office tenants. It will provide cutting-edge facilities to meet the growing needs of technology-based companies engaged in software development and BPOs such as contact centers, animation, and medical transcription.

State of the ration

BREAKTIME

Conrado E. Bawad III

DOWN HERE IN MY BAILIWICK, WE'D SOON rue eyes looking for signs of the good job that the core administration of Gloriastra appears still to be executing.

According to people who make a lot of money by imagining some great deeds of Glorians, this core administration did well particularly in fiscal management. For one, Glorastra's fears brought down the budget deficit. To the tune, mind, of course, it does not matter to writhe debts.

We all know that the budget deficit went down mainly because of new taxes—such as the expanded VAT. We also know that the additional revenue from the VAT came mainly from us. Hints us mistake: We, the people, paid more in all.

Every one-two of additional tax or so, however, should only awaken further our already immense spending power. Thanks to the high price of oil.

The additional taxes become more painful to us, because today we spend more on fuel, electricity, and everything that has anything to do with oil.

And it's all because this core administration insisted as to make sacrifices for the country. They said we just have to pay more taxes. Wow! Only, it's one-way sacrifice story. What are they doing about the government's fuel-spending habits?

It's not just about the wasted tax money on the Hospital Inconsistency, although the issue of deadwood in the government is increasing by the minute.

It is is not too much to ask of Glorastra, are we only interested to knowing what this core administration is doing about graft and corruption.

You see, everyday we hear and read about multimillion-peso deals that which almost always involve the Hizzes. Some people are making a lot of money at our expense. It's as if they serious kalokohan among themselves.

So now the Palace boys , plus the whiners in Congress and business organizations, are saying that, thanks to this core administration, our lives should be getting better.

According to their newspaper ads, we are already among the highest paid workers in Asia. That's why we do not need any pay increase.

They hope to say that utilities, rent, food, education and transport are costing us much more nowadays. We may have one of the highest wages in Asia, sure, but nobody ever dares to say that the cost of living in this country is one of the other countries combined.

We do not even eat well!

And they tell us that we are doing better? Don't bother, hoss! We know what we know down here.

* * *

Some Sy, the last apparent of SM group's Henry Sy, is proving to be the chief breaker in the family. At least it's the impression she is creating to build on the fears most consumers.

Not so long ago, the SM group was deep in negotiations to acquire a chain of retail chain carrying imported goods. On top of the acquisition talks on the side of the SM group was one of the Four younger brothers of Some Sy.

Initially, from what we heard, the SM group was offered P1.4 billion for the retail chain chain. After tough bargaining, the SM group was able to bring it down to P1.2 billion.

But just when both parties were ready to sign the paper, Some Sy balked in and demanded a much lower price of P800 million. The deal was cancelled.

Pissing hard ball against the retail chain, somebody in the SM group ordered accumulate out of the retail chain's credit lines with banks controlled by the group, namely Banco de Oro and EPCIB, to which one previous bench, the GSIS and the SSS, poured almost P26 billion.

No wonder, today the stores of the retail chain hardly have anything to sell anymore. At least, according to talk in Binondo, the SM group was able to collect all its one compellion by using the banks it controls.

* * *

Metrobank, the biggest bank in the country today, is starting to flex its financial muscle. Metrobank chair Antonio Alvarez says the bank will pursue, and either aggressively or even hostile way to acquire some competition

DaimlerChrysler expands RP presence

By Rurtzel M. Domingo

AUTOMOTIVE GIANT DaimlerChrysler yesterday launched its second dealership in the country amid growing vehicle sales and in line with a global thrust to introduce a line up of new models in this area.

Peter Mackenzie, head of the firm's operation in Southeast Asia, said in an interview that the new facility along Cebu City Boulevard in Banilad is "just up a year ahead of schedule."

"When we started our partnership with CATS Motors Inc.—our sole authorized distributor in the Philippines, we agreed that we should have five dealerships within five years," Mackenzie said.

DaimlerChrysler and CATS signed a partnership agreement in December 2006 and opened its first showroom in Mandaluyong City last June in April 2008.

The Singapore-based official said local sales volume was better than expected.

"The numbers are selling volume, sales rate and sports utility vehicles under the Chrysler, Dodge and Jeep brands.

The Chrysler Sebring drew rooms and service center launching or display space, performance bays ...including those for heavy repair, bodywork and paintwork.

Robert P. Shaw, CATS salesman vice president, said the partners expected to see sales growing by double-digit rates.

Shaw said the growth projection for 2007 was also realized to about 60 percent higher than the original target for that year.

He said the firm's sales were in preliminary talks for a third dealership that could open next year. "The chief would be outside Metro Manila, probably in Cebu," Shaw said.

The firm's homebuilt is the Grand Cherokee SRT-8 sedan, which is the Chrysler group's flagship model worldwide.

The Chrysler Town and Country minivan, which is more popular globally, also sells strongly here. Other models already available in the country are the Dodge Durango mid-size SUV, Jeep Commander SUV, and the Chrysler Sebring sport sedan "which offers the best features of an SUV, minivan and our all-rolled into one."

Customs seen hitting ₱15.5-B collection target for July

Boosting efforts to bring down budget gap to ₱125B

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS (BOC) it was likely to meet its ₱15.5-billion collection goal for July.

This will further boost the national government's chances of attaining a future than projected budget deficit this year.

Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales said the BOC was already near to target with one more week to go before July ends.

He did not give specific figures but said the BOC was scheduled to collect this week from Bureau Corp., alone, some ₱800 million in duties, excise tax and value-added tax (VAT). He said, would be enough for the BOC to meet, if not surpass, the ₱15.5-billion collection goal for the month.

Morales said his office's internal target was ₱200 billion, as set by the Department of Finance, for official target for this year is ₱187 billion.

The BOC's revenue target is aimed at helping the government bring down the budget gap to not by ₱125 billion this year, no lower than last year's ₱146.9 billion. With a relatively healthy revenue collection and the reinvestment of the 2008 budget, which forced the economic branch to restrain spending, fiscal authorities expect the budget deficit to fall way below the ₱125 billion projected for the year.

For the first six months of the year, the BOC generated ₱64.6 billion worth of revenue, higher by 6 percent than the ₱60.7 billion target set for the period.

Morales said the BOC had instituted measures to ensure the collection efficiency of the agency, such as the Anti-Dummy Law. The law provided a mechanism for the granting of penalty or reward to customs personnel depending on their collection performance.

The Customs chief ordered a stepped-up crackdown of heads of various customs ports to boost the agency's collections.

"If you are a nonperforming asset, you have to be replaced by someone who could collect," Morales said.

In the meantime, the BOC announced the following new appointments: Adelina Medina to head the Manila International Container Port; Carlos Jr. Nilay Aquino International Airport District; Ricardo Belmonte, Port of Cebu; Elmer Enriquez, Port of Batangas; Ms. Lourdes Manguerra, Port of Iloilo; Orestes Saturnga, North Harbor; and Ms. Nora Zamoranos, Port of Subic.

Smart, Piltel sign up 1.57M new subscribers

By Rica T. Orchondra

PHILIPPINE LONG DISTANCE CO. (PLDT) signed up 1.57 million new cellular phone subscribers in the second quarter of the year, bringing the phone giant's mobile phone subscriber base to 22.47 million as of June.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, PLDT said its subscriber base level as of June was up 7.5 percent from the end-March base of 20.9 million.

In the first quarter, PLDT's mobile phone arms, Smart Communications Inc. and Philippine Telephone Company (Piltel), signed up 2.06-million subscribers.

Its widening subscriber base in the cellular phone business alone boosts expectations that PLDT will report in Aug. Its second quarter income that is much higher than the P6 billion it recorded in the second quarter of 2007 and the P6.4-billion reported in the first quarter of 2008.

PLDT is entering a revenue that will offer a direct-to-home (DTH) satellite pay television service in the country. The venture will be undertaken in partnership with Columbus Communications Corp., a DTH satellite TV operator in the US, and GS Broadcasting Systems Inc., which has a nationwide license to offer satellite TV services.

GNPower acquires first retail electricity supplier's license

By Abigail L. Ho

POWER GENERATOR GNPOWER RECENTLY received the first ever retail electricity supply or (RES) license granted by the Energy Regulatory Commission, allowing it to acquire supply contracts with end-users open competition in the areas of new competition and open access.

ERC chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. said that the issuance of the first RES license would open competition in the power sector—something the author of RA 9136, or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001, are currently promoting.

"This is another milestone in the emerging restructured electric power industry," Albano said.

RES are entities that can sell, broker, market or aggregate electricity to end-users in the "contestable market" once retail competition and open access takes effect, according to the amended RES license guidelines signed on July 1.

The "contestable market" refers to electricity end-users who are given the right to choose their own power suppliers, instead of the assigned RES-type distributor that distributes utilities serve under their franchises.

For a person or organization to qualify as a RES, financial and technical capabilities must be proven.

On the financial aspect, a license applicant should have one of the following to prove its capability to undertake the business: An investment-grade credit rating by a reputable credit institution; issued cash resources equivalent to its posted monthly billings of at least P1-million; or a proof of credit-worthiness as confirmed through certifications from firms that have extended credit terms to the applicant, including private electric power utilities companies.

On the technical side, an applicant must be able to operate and manage an electricity supply business, which also includes proper understanding of the ERC's rules, codes and guidelines, and the application of such to its business.

The ERC said GNPower has substantially complied with all the requirements under the RES license guidelines.

GNPower is a limited partnership formed by Power Partners Ltd. Co. and PMI Holding Corp. as general and limited partners, respectively. It has a 600-megawatt coal-fired power plant currently being developed near Mariveles, Bataan.

Ateneo holds business forum

THE ATENEO GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS (AGSB) is hosting a by-invitation only business leadership forum titled "Into A Chinese Century: Is the Philippines ready?" to be held on Thursday, July 17, 2008 from 3 to 6 p.m. at the Ateneo Professional Schools (APS) Auditorium in Rockwell Center.

The event will be shown in AGSB's off-campus facility and will be covered live via a webcast. The webcast may be viewed on www.videostream.ateneo.com/asean. Over 800 senior executives from the business sector, faculty and students are expected to attend.

Serving as a kick-off event for the graduate school's 40th anniversary, the business forum features Finance Secretary Margarito B. Teves, PLDT chair Manuel V. Pangilinan and General Electric Asia-Pacific director Alessio P. Molero. AGSB Dean Alfredo R.A. Sengzon will commence the event.

The Business Leadership Forum provides the stage for the speakers, though presentation of their own experiences, to mount a call to action and provoke the leadership to galvanize all sectors toward building the nation.

Teves, former representative of the third district of Negros Oriental, was responsible for a number of economic reform laws. Aside from the position as PLDT, Pangilinan also serves as chair of Metro Pacific Corp., Landco Pacific Corp., Filipino Telephone Corp. and Smart Communications.

Gov't beats tax forecast...

From page B1

tion could have been higher if not for the decline in domestic oil production.

On the other hand, Beltran said, the BOC enjoyed higher than programmed VAT collections due to an increase in the volume of oil imports.

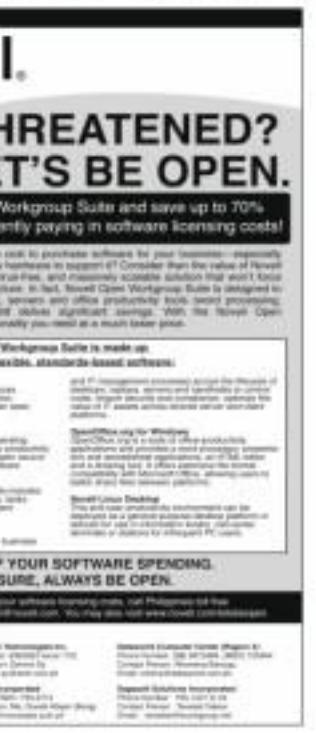
While the BIR imposes VAT on domestic goods and services, the BOC charges the tax on imported goods.

The DOF said gross VAT collections in the first five months stood at P97.5 billion, but the government collected a net amount of only P59.7 billion because of the foregone revenues resulting from the various incentives implemented to mitigate the impact of the VAT law on consumer's purchasing power.

The VAT law basically expanded the coverage of the value-added tax to include oil, electricity and medical and legal services among others. It also raised the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent to generate additional revenues for the government.

The law also contains a non-VAT related provision that increases the excise tax components on beer by two to five percent.

But the law also contained provisions that were meant to ease the impact of higher taxes. The mitigating measures include the removal of the excise tax on petroleum products, the repeal of the franchise tax previously imposed on power distribution, and the exclusion of consumer goods, services tax on domestic and international transport.



BUSINESS

Gov't moves to ensure competition in power

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Economic team to forge clear cross ownership rules

By Abigail L. Ho

WITH THE UPCOMING SALE OF generation assets by Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) and Meralco Philippines Corp., the country's economic managers are looking to forge clearer cross-ownership rules to ensure competition in the power industry.

"We are aware that we cannot totally eliminate cross-ownership, but we hope to avoid the creation of groups with enough market power to dictate the price of electricity in their respective grids," the economic team said in a statement.

The economic team includes the departments of budget and management, energy, trade, finance and the National Economic Development Authority.

The team said the ongoing divestments in the local power sector should not lead to a consolidation of market powers.

The team, thus, encouraged private investors to put up new power generating facilities, especially in areas with a supply demand gap.

"The economic team noted that National Power Corp. may no longer develop any new facilities.

"These rules on cross-ownership would provide an assurance to the millions of electricity consumers that their interests are amply protected," the economic team said. "These measures are meant to enhance competition and ultimately bring down the price of electricity in the Philippines."

Salcon to invest ₱900M in water infra projects

By Christine B. Gaylican

SALCON PTE LTD. OF SINGAPORE plans to invest at least P900 million in water infrastructure projects over the next three years, a company official said.

S.E. Tan, Salcon's general manager for water and environment division, said the company was looking at opportunities in sewers and wastewater treatment projects with local municipal and water districts under the build-operate-transfer system.

"We are willing to engage in water projects, whether it would be BOT, as well as design and build projects required by local government and local government," Tan told the business newspaper.

The company was recently commissioned by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System to build a P700-million sewerage treatment facility for the east concession area in Manila and other nearby provinces.

The company likewise completed Cebu Hilton Resort Hotel's 200 million liter a day water facility. Public Joint Glass' Manila water treatment facility, Victorias Milling Co. Ltd.'s water treatment plant as well as Lyric and Liberty Flour Engineering & Construction Co.'s water treatment facilities.

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INSIDE OUT
Cory Quirino

HOW DO YOU DO IT? I AM often asked this question. About five out of the 10 who ask are women in their 20s or older who may or may not know how to get started on a health regimen. Three out of 10 are guy who wish to have glowing complexion while the rest are men who are generous with their praises.

True story

Many years ago, I was shown everyday a group of women to another class. After days, they would ask me for the latest dieting tips and I would generously share my lifestyle.

Conscious of their appearances (they were all overweight) they diligently took notes and listened with great interest. Months passed but I noticed no improvement.

Each one had to lose at least 10 lbs. But, instead of losing, they actually gained. And yet, the ritual continued...I would share lessons after each workout.

In truth, I knew that I was wasting my (a)the same things over and over again.

One day, after class, I decided to set out the role of good teacher. Giving them one home food time. I followed them to their favorite coffee shop for a "surprise" visit that was more like a police raid. Literally caught them in the act.

Their heads consisted of lechon, halang-ang puso, plus a platter of Chole Bar.

When I asked them why they chose those things, they proudly answered, "Look, you told us low fat, right? Well, we what we did to the lechon...we only ate the skin!"

Stunned, I simply smiled and turned around. It was because of these ladies that I decided to write my book "Forever Young" (to English and some Filipino subtext). Once published, the same question, "How do you do it?" My answer was short and sweet. "Read my book."

There is no other interpretation for a specific regimen—you just have to tailor it to face value. So, we give it your own color. So, it is fads, you only have yourself to blame—not the author or the dietician or even your doctor.

Get going

The tips:

1. Stop talking about what you plan to do. Just do it...not yesterday nor tomorrow, but now. Give yourself a reasonable deadline and a schedule.

2. Set your double target today.

Obviously, a weight loss of 10 lb in one week may be achievable (assuming you avoid added fats & junk salt) unless supervised by your physician or a medical spa (like the Penn in Ann Hunter). So don't despair over zero progress. Work with your doctor.

3. Follow strictly these general rules:

- Don't overeat. Stop the minute you feel full.
- Avoid fatty, oily and fried foods.
- Don't binge on junk food.
- Be extremely strict (Sorry, Chloe). In this down fats, declare a no dessert/sugar week. It works!!
- Eat vegetables before any other meal. In fact, try to make your veggies the main meal.
- Train yourself to eat more veggies than meat.
- Drink 16 ounces after a meal (not during). Better yet, drink water before a meal. This helps digestion.
- Be easy on carbohydrates (especially white flour).
- Don't give up ever. Disciplining the self takes time. After a month, when you see visible and dramatic results, make it your lifestyle.
- Take your daily vitamin/mineral supplements. It isn't true they will make you gain weight. Don't believe it anymore.
- Buy a body brush from any health store. Daily stimulation of your lymphatic system by brushing from feet to neck will detoxify you.
- Put your favorite dress or pants to test. This will motivate you to buy a new one, two sizes smaller) is a prominent place to inspire you to achieve your dreaming goals.
- Affirm with me: "I am what I want it to be!"

Love and light!

Celebrate life with Cory Quirino and Ski Ante the health, beauty and wellness day at the Mall of Asia on July 30. Music Hall, ground floor (facing the bay). Admission is free. Be it sure, there will be a movie walk/chat and a P 1,000, a mixed drink. There are games, fun competitions and raffles. Call 3674494.

The science behind your workout

Art tee

BEHIND THE SUCCESS OR FAILure of your workout programs are basic exercise science principles.

Runners don't have strong upper bodies unless they lift weights because the specificity principle states, "You only get good at what you train for."

If you exercise sporadically, you can't expect results because you are not giving your body enough of an overload for it to get fitter.

Here are some other scientific "rules" that surround the outcome of your exercise regimen:

Overcompensation

This is related to the overload principle. It explains how the body adapts to any overload.

A simple example of overcompensation is a callus. It is the body's attempt to protect a part of your body that is being subjected to constant friction or pressure.

The body doesn't just repair the area with the same kind of skin. It overcompensates by developing slightly harder and firmer skin so you won't get hurt anymore. The more friction is applied, the more your body responds to protect your skin by making your callus bigger and harder.

The body does the same thing when you lift a weight that you are not used to. If you keep doing it regularly, the body will "wake up" muscle fibers that have not been previously used. After a period of time, and if you keep increasing the weights, the body will start making the individual muscle fibers thicker.

When you are training anerobically, the body will overcompensate by increasing the number of mitochondria (a cell structure where aerobic energy is produced) and capillaries and by making the heart stronger so it can pump more blood per beat.

Reversibility

Also called the "use it or lose it" principle, it is the opposite of overcompensation.

Callouses disappear when you stop applying friction (with a little help from a pumice stone or chemical cream).

It is the same with exercise. When you stop, your body will revert back to its original fitness level. This will not happen right away but you will eventually be back to where you started.

The body is very efficient. It will only maintain for what it needs. If you don't lift anything heavier than a coffee cup and don't push anything bigger than a computer mouse, then your body only needs muscles strong enough to do those activities.

So all the muscular strength you achieved from past workouts will disappear, together with additional benefits like firm, shapely muscles.

THE SCIENCE /C3

WELL AND GOOD

Tessa Sison

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Front-to-back tie shoelaces lunge

STRENGTHENS THE LEGS, BUTTocks, and core muscles

Equipment
None

Exercise technique

1. Stand with one leg in front and one leg behind.
2. Bend down and reach for your shoe as if you were tying the lace.
3. Straighten up then pivot to face the front of the room.
4. Bend down and reach for your shoe as if you were tying the lace.
5. Straighten up then pivot to face the front of the room.
6. This equals one repetition.

Performance tips

1. Keep spine neutral...neither arched nor rounded.
2. Avoid bringing knee past your toes.
3. Modify this exercise by reducing a little part knee level instead of all the way down to the shoelaces.
4. Focus on the balls of your feet so that knees are always facing in the same direction as your toes. This is to prevent your knees.

Variation

1. Do not straighten up anymore. Stay in the best position as you pivot from to back.
2. Be very careful of your knees. You should always be in line with your knees.

Repetitions

10 repetitions per leg (assuming you urge of running from to back). Do the same with your other leg in front.

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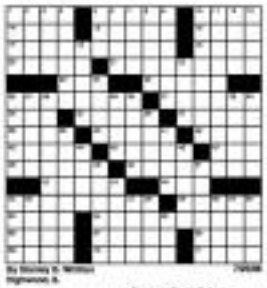
DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1 Dove
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15 "Waterloo" singer pairing
16 Albert or Lena Guillen
17 Ancient Semitic language
19 Mythical queen of Carthage
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21 Become smoke
22 Show up
23 Land or sea
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43 Sort of token
44 Hockey player
45 NASA's Lewis's partner
46 Opponent
47 Television maker's
51 Divided in attendance
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61 Donald's partner in crime
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36 Choice of basketball
37 Mouthpiece
38 Golf contribution
41 Bake well
46 Tungsten
48 Courtroom records
51 Mongrel's namesake
53 Hockey
55 Tight to "Greatbanks"
56 Bleed as well
57 Liquid
58 Miles slightly
60 Stable parent
62 Tabernacle
63 Wee-wee Glade
65 Birthday accessory
66 Coop contact

Monday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

THIS WEEK TODAY: You're imaginative, adventurous, and playful. You have the ability to listen carefully to others and to understand their points of view. You love to push your own limits and try new things. You are a good leader. You're dependable and responsible. You're defensive and protective over everything. You're defensive and protective over everything. You're defensive and protective over everything

Everyone has psychic power or ability

Part 2

HERE ARE MORE QUESTIONS FROM THE Ateneo de Manila University's independent publication called Inkpinot:

What psychic gift do you possess?

Truthfully speaking, I do not possess any special psychic gift that is not possessed by everybody else. People have a wrong notion of psychic ability. They think it is possessed only by a few so-called gifted persons.

In fact, everybody has psychic power or ability to a lesser or greater degree. This is a natural talent, like singing or dancing. Everybody can sing or dance better than others.

The same is true with psychic ability. Everybody has it because it is a natural ability or power of our inner mental faculties.

People are often frightened by things they do not fully understand. What can you say about this?

It is natural for people to be afraid of the unknown, because we cannot tell whether it is harmful or not. For example, death is scary for us because we do not know what will happen after we die.

Do we just disintegrate like a bubble, or do we live again as a spirit? Do we come back to earth to another life, as the Hindu and Buddhists believe, or do we get stuck in a preserved heaven or hell?

Anything that comes directly from the spirit world is scary to the living because we have not bothered to study this field. The cases of our fear, therefore, is ignorance.

What is the antidote for ignorance? Isn't it "knowledge" or "fact"? Once we have knowledge or fact, then the unknown ceases to be mysterious. It becomes the "known." What

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

ter "know," we can handle already.

Does everybody possess the gift of, say, telepathy, telekinesis, intuition, clairvoyance?

We, but as I pointed out earlier, some people are better at it than others. That's all. But everybody is psychic, no exception, because the word psychic comes from the Greek word "psyche" meaning mind or soul. So everybody who has a mind or a soul is psychic.

The problem in the Philippines is people have falsely associated psychic with a fortune-teller or a person able to tell the future. This is absolutely wrong.

There are many forms or types of psychic powers that do not involve knowing future events, such as those you enumerated: telepathy, telekinesis and clairvoyance. There are also people who can do remote viewing, heal the sick psychically, communicate with spirits, but cannot tell the future. They are all psychics.

Is it possible to develop this psychic gift even if you do not have any or must you be born with it?

We all have psychic ability, as already mentioned. So one can say he does not have any. This ability can be developed or enhanced. How?

The simplest and most important techniques or method to develop psychic powers is through regular meditation. Fifteen to 30 minutes of daily meditation is sufficient to experience a growing sensitivity in psychic forces.

A special form of meditation to stimulate or activate the psychic centers (or chakras) would be better. But this should be done under guidance of a knowledgeable person or teacher to avoid pitfalls or problems.

People can also attend seminars on how to develop ESP. For example, I conduct regularly a seminar to develop such powers as telepathy, psychometry, sensing the aura, psychic diagnosis, remote viewing and telekinesis. This is usually held in Makati but I can also conduct this seminar anywhere else in the Philippines, or even abroad, if invited.

In a world ruled by science and technology, how would you distinguish what is real from a hoax or trick?

We can use the scientific method to know what is real and what is not. But there are subtle methods. For example, we can ask several known psychics or clairvoyants to verify what other so-called psychics are doing. They can see if it is fraudulent, a hallucination or only a magic trick.

Remember what the philosopher Soren Kierkegaard said: "There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what isn't so. The other is to refuse to believe what is so."

Next week, I will answer questions about the Inner Mind Development Institute and what science has to say about paranormal phenomena and the mystical.

The problem in the Philippines is people have falsely associated psychic with a fortune-teller

The science behind . . .

From page 81

It is sad but true that it is much easier to "lose it" than to "use it."

Individuality

When it comes to exercise programs, one size does not fit all. Even if you and a friend follow the exact same diet and exercise program, your bodies will respond differently.

Human beings are similar in the sense that everyone has one heart, one liver, two arms, two legs, and all the other parts. Just each of us has a unique genetic history that affects the way we respond to exercise or diet.

Some people have such responsive muscles that a few weeks of weightlifting is all they need to start seeing definition and firmness. Others need a few months before seeing any type of aesthetic results.

In an experiment done in Quebec University by exercise physiologist Claude Bouchard, 47 young men were put on exercise programs for five months. Some of the men showed 100-percent improvement in fitness levels. Others registered no change at all.

Even metabolism can be different from person to person. Obesity researcher Eric Ravussin proved this when he measured the resting metabolic rates (the amount of energy needed to run the basic body functions) of 500 subjects. He found that some people burned 3,000 plus calories a day while others burned only 1,000 plus.

Some people are genetically predisposed to being good at aerobic-type activity and because champion marathon runners. Others are genetically inclined to succeed at power-type activities and win medals in powerlifting. Others have the natural strength and flexibility to excel in yoga.

This is why you cannot compare yourself to anyone else and also why you can't just blindly follow the exercise program of your friend and expect the same results. He or she has different parents and grandparents.

Note: The Sports Medicine Association of the Philippines will hold its annual Sports Medicine Module Seminar on July 29. The event is open to students, coaches, trainers, and sports-exercise enthusiasts. Call 531-9125 or 0917-3997-031 or e-mail sportsmedphil@yahoo.com.

Filed under: Exercise/Fitness, Health

New hand sanitizer in the market

PURELL, A LEADING HAND SANITIZER IN the United States, is now available locally in original and aloe version.

Hand sanitizers will help protect children from diseases since 80 percent of infectious illnesses have been found to be spread by the hands.

A study found that frequent use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers resulted in a lower rate of secondary transmission of respiratory illness.

Purell hand sanitizer has been shown to be effective against a variety of organisms, reportedly killing bacteria on contact. It contains emollients to keep the skin soft.

A US Food and Drug Administration study found Purell nontoxic and food-safe compliant so it could be used immediately before meals.

A product of Vi-Jon, Purell is exclusively available in all Mercury Drug outlets nationwide.

MABEL Mateo, Mariner Mateo, Nene Lozano, Jeanne Zamora and Greg Mateo

HONARD Belmonte, Hollie Aldaba and BMW's Joerg Breuer

An homage to friendship, a toast to glorious food

CESAR Sulmo

MAY Nisi

WILSON Tang

FE Ng and Chit Salud

HONETTE Guevara

CHE Singson and Fe Rodrigues

BECKY Garcia

RONALD Guardia, Imperial Appliance Plaza's Rudy Tiu and Jessenia Benedicto. Imperial Appliance Plaza received special recognition for the increase in its large screen television sales.

AVELINO Emperium's Jessy Ng, Sony Philippines VP for national sales Toshiya Kagita, Aerson Emperium's Jeanne Ng, and Sony Philippines product specialist for Handycam Catherine Tan. Aerson Emperium was recognized as the dealer with the highest growth in sales of the brand Wega and Bravia LCD televisions.

TWINKLE Bahad, Sony Philippines Christianne Sherwin Tan, Avid Sales Hiroaki Kobayashi, Sony Philippines Susan Tan, Avid Sales, and Toshiya Kagita, Sony Philippines, Avid Sales was named dealer of the year.

ONE IN WHO CHOSEN TO ATTEND the super fun birthday dinner hosted by Ignacio Jerome and Mecca's multi-awarded Bulacan Velon for his long-time pal and publicist Bernie Ramirez, principe, and held at Bobong P.'s Makati nook.

It was a culinary experience worthy of a fine-dining star, the splendid menu throwing the extraordinary talents of Christine Zamudio, head chef of the Mezze Restaurant and Bar in Greenbelt 2. Ostreine served at Wolfgang Puck's world-famous restaurant Spago's, in Las Vegas, dahlings.

For starters, foie gras was served two ways—seared over baked apples and cabernet, then as a mousse over toasted brioche with black currants. The wine was Chateau du Hochedenaz 2000.

Also served was Norwegian Smoked Salmon Salad, succulent, followed by a yummy healthy dish of crispy baby carrots, red radish, fermented soy beans and organic greens, with a tangy tarragon mint-garnie dressing, drizzling perfectly well with Mont Gras Chardonnay 2004 (Chile).

The first entrée was Truffled Spaghettini Pasta with sweet basil and bitter arugula, garnished with fresh chianti-chard parmigiano reggiano. The perfect wine accompaniment was Montes Sauvignon Blanc Fume Reserve 2005 (Chile).

The re-do for grand entrée was Migeron of Angus beef tenderloin grilled with bourbon and hickory smoked bacon sauce, and garnished with canned vegetables and potatoes a la Lyonnaise, as smoothly washed down by Montes Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve 2004 (Chile).

The grand finale was the magnificent Tropical Treasures a la Hawaiiane, a fruity, layered confection with mini-lady fingers and macaroon cream.

As expected, the fab dinner was patronized by discerning tastes.

As our birthday boy Bonnie R. said: "The affair was less a celebration of another milestone in my life, but more an homage to friendship." And, if not may add, a toast to food, glorious food!

Cheers, padrigas!

Retreat for the weary

"Kadet kamo at Punta Bulata. Kendeon gid!" ("Go to Punta Bulata. It's so beautiful!") Its super lovers Imanchil Eva Hernando and ex-ilustrado southern baron Oliver Lopez transported some of their close pals to Corcuera, an island in Negros and a few hours away from bustling Bacolod City.

Heavenly Punta Bulata is perfect for unwinding tired minds and bodies. The gorgeous deep blue waters of the Sulu Sea, home to exotic marine life, definitely calm the spirit.

Now friend of Eva A. and Ginny L., Bing Rama (architect of the late French ambassador), together with cyber smart gals of Bridges@work, vivaciously led Annie Blaque and Toni Gregory, fantastic couple Georgie Diaz B. and husband William Ballier, who was looking great, and international businessman Henry Dalsanto (as introduced to the allure of nature).

Anjo Zalsanto and Beth Jackson served as the therapeutic secretary of the spa Spa. Here Society's Liz Bernardo, whose newfound mission is to help the tired and weary through meditation, brought the gals to obvious as she taught them the basics of meditation.

A PUNTA Bulata moment for Beth Jackson, Hiren Zayas, Bing Rama and Eva Manzanilla (front row); Liz Bernardo, Toni Gregory, Annie Ringer, Jojo Zalsanto and Georgie Ballier.

Georgie Diaz Ballier, Toni Gregory, Beth Jackson and Annie Ringer at Rio Diaz Cojuangco's crypt at the Pantheon chapel

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Mauricio Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using Kodak EasyShare

The fab pair behind the event, Brenden Zapata and his wife Aileen E., gave the city slick-ers a taste of Hispanic hospitality, pampanga.

On the way to Punta Bulata, the gang totally stopped at the sprawling retreat in Pontevedra of Danding and the gorgeous Gumbau Cojuangco, to visit the resting place of the late Rio Cojuangco inside the estate's chapel.

After four hot and totally relaxing days, with the mind, body and spirit well-nourished and rejuvenated, the group bade "hasta la vista" to Punta Bulata.

Check out this audiosex haven by the sea at www.puntabulata.com.

New products

Sony Philippines gathered its dealers from all over the country in a two-day conference at the Quiet Hotel Nikko, attended by notable personalities from high society and business. They witnessed the unveiling of Sony's spectacular new products.

Sony Philippines also honored its most outstanding dealers for 2006. Among the awardees were Avid Sales Corporation, Dealer of the Year for Handycam and Digital Imaging Accessories; Aberoon Inc. for Sony Cybershots; and True Appliance Inc. for large-screen televisions. Aerson's Emporium was cited for registering the highest growth in sales of Grand Wega, projection TV Wega and Bravia. The JS Yap Group was named top provincial dealer.

The most anticipated award, Top Dealer of 2005, went to Avid Sales Corporation, represented by Hiroaki Kobayashi, Sony Philippines president and chief executive officer.

Sony Philippines' vice president for national sales, said: "In our homes, our dealers are more than just business partners. They are esteemed friends. This simple ceremony is our way of telling them, thanks-a-gajo-gazillion! Thank you very much!"

"It is because of your cooperation and trust that Sony Philippines is No. 1," said Kagita.

Aside from adding new models to existing product categories, Sony also unveiled a new category with the launch of the dangerously sexy Xplod six-audio series, pairengan.

The wow Sony Xplod Car Audio Series has a complete line of head units, amplifiers, plus new AV products.

For more info, visit www.sony.com.ph or call 8767600. You can also go to any Sony store nationwide.

JAAP Gambra, Boy Castillo, Avid Exec. Bonnie Gambra and Joseph Ying of Key Largo

WILLIAM and Georgie Ballier running after a crab on the beach

owned by Quintessence Sherwin Chan and Bonnie Tan.

Sony Philippines gave out the awards to thank the dealers for their kind support this past year. In the awardee Toshiya Kagita, Sony Philippines' vice president for national sales, said: "In our homes, our dealers are more than just business partners. They are esteemed friends. This simple ceremony is our way of telling them, thanks-a-gajo-gazillion! Thank you very much!"

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